TOWERS WITH IVY

MINNIE HITE MOODY

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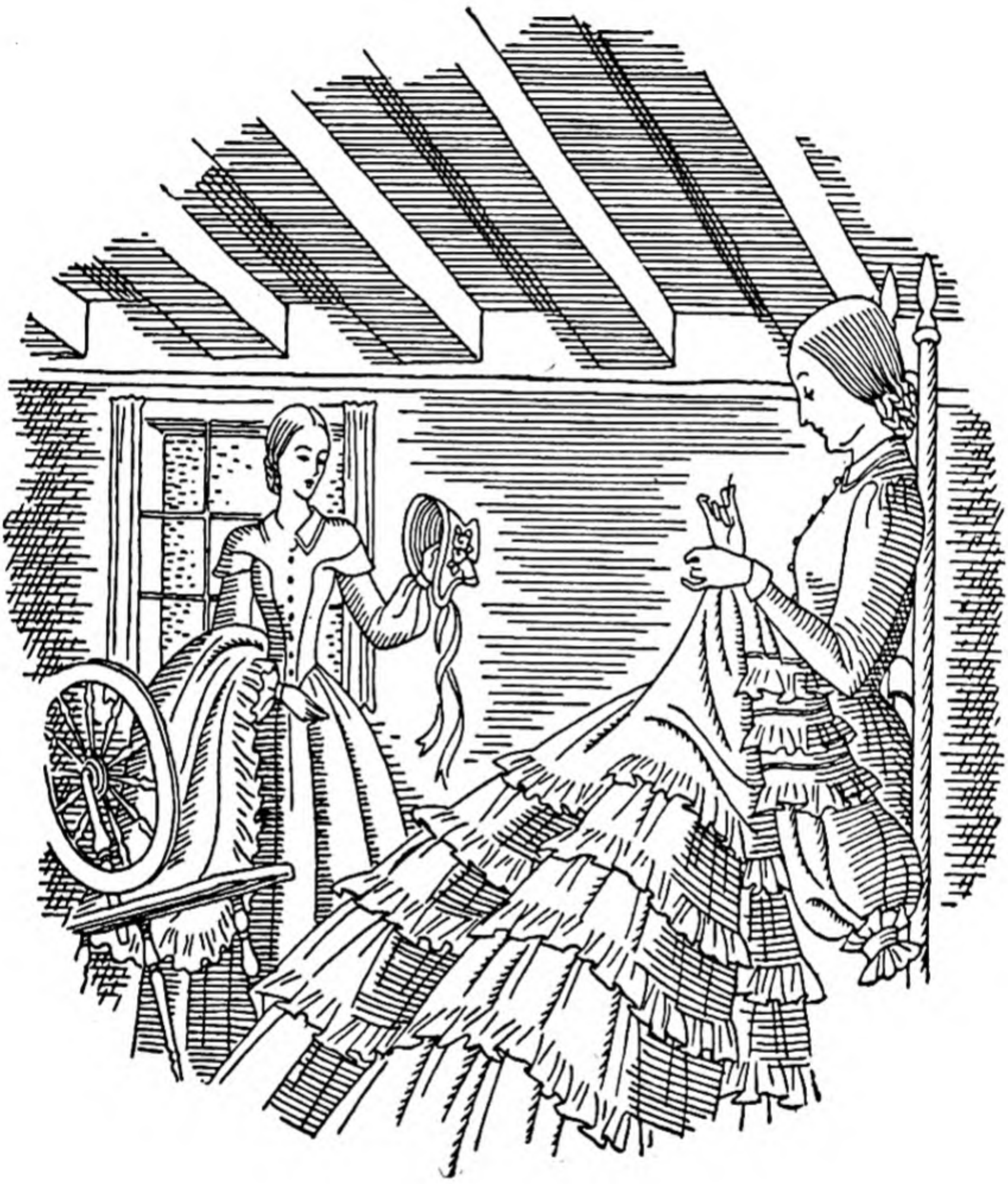
THE physical setting of this novel coincides in part with that of an actual village in which a college really has stood for more than a hundred years. Some of the incidents are borrowed from the history of that village, with a wide indulgence for the necessities of fiction. But it must be definitely understood that this is an historical novel in neither sense nor purpose. All the people are imaginary, and with the single exception of its material scene, the college is entirely and intentionally invented.

M. H. M.

BOOK ONE



THE college stands on the northernmost of the hills surrounding the village. These hills lie in long low ridges, outlining the valley, but within the village and in all directions about it certain portions of these ridges are of so individual a pattern as to have come by special names. One hill to the south is called Old Posey Pot, and a symmetrical knob on the western edge of the village itself, Sugar Lump. The eastern boundary of the village is defined by Mount Colossus, and beyond it, a little to the north, another knob goes by the name of The Crocodile, because of a peculiar effigy raised upon its broad top by prehistoric people.

But on the morning of Amarila Wing's wedding day these hills were deeply wooded with beech and walnut and white ash, or newly cleared, the mark of the axe fresh upon them. When Amarila looked out at dawn to see if the day would be fair, her gaze lingered a moment upon such stumps, on the nearest hillside, and she fell to thinking of the smooth black walnut planks Josiah Winfield had used in the building of the house which was

to be his home, and her own, before this rising sun had clambered over the hills and the village and finally vanished behind another line of dark rolling hills to the west.

The bed in which she had scarcely slept was already made, and spread with a pure white linen sheet; she had begun to arrange her wedding garments upon it. The embroidered shoulder scarf which would hang to below her knees was there, and the pale green scoop bonnet with its embellishment of frail, pink, modest flowers. Her beautiful dress was not there, but downstairs, where the seamstress had stitched last night until long after candlelight. When Miss Sarah had finished the final seam and straightened the crinoline and tried to put the needle down, her fingers were so cramped she could not let it go; Amarila had had to take it from them, and rub the stiff joints so that at last Miss Sarah could tie her bonnet on and start home. When the door was opened for her to go, they noticed the first frost upon the September air.

"Hurry," Amarila said. "You'll take ague from the night air. Draw your shawl up closer about your neck."

"I'll walk briskly," Miss Sarah said. "Now don't *you* take a chill, Amarila. And get a good night's rest for tomorrow. Blow out your candle and be off to sleep."

"Yes," Amarila said, knowing there could be no sleep for her that night. Not an owl could hoot but she would hear it, not a dog bay in the village that her ears would not catch the sound.

Upstairs, Uncle William was long asleep; his peaceful snoring rose and fell like the water in Squire Fasick's mill dam, fringed by willows, half a mile to the east. But Uncle William was not being married tomorrow. The day of his marriage with Aunt Abigail was as far in the past as the long rough journey over the Pennsylvania mountains which had brought them to settle in the village. Some of it was forgotten now; the rest was obscured by the facts of actuality. Uncle William was old; Aunt Abigail was old. She sat now waiting by the fireplace where the small hickory fire was dying. When Miss Sarah's step had dissolved in the darkness and Amarila had carefully latched the door, Aunt Abigail started to speak, but there was no way of saying what she was thinking. Tears come without bidding to the very old, and it was as if those tears washed the words away. "Goodnight, Amarila," she said, feeling vaguely that she had failed. And Amarila said "Goodnight, Aunt Abigail," and her fingers trembled so that the light of the candle made dancing figures on the wall. In her heart she knew that she was afraid to hear whatever Aunt Abigail had been upon the point of saying. Whatever it was, it was not a part of this house, where she had lived since her second summer. It had to do with the great square house Josiah Winfield had built to take her to: it was something which would be staunchly walled in with lumber from the tall trees which had helped forest the rolling hills and deep

dark valleys. It was something which belonged to Josiah and herself—Aunt Abigail was so old she had forgotten: it was every bit as well that her words had been lost in tears.

But in the morning, spreading the beautiful new garments upon the bed, her own tears threatened their loveliness. There was her wedding handkerchief, pressed into fanlike folds; there were the finely stitched things she was to wear underneath, and the flat narrow slippers that had been weeks on their uncertain journey all the way from New York.

It was one thing that all of her friends thought it wonderful that she was to become the bride of Josiah Winfield, the banker, and that Miss Sarah and Aunt Abigail's friends should flutter and whisper at the very mention of the wedding day, or at sight of the full, fine nightdresses Miss Sarah had stitched so painstakingly, or that a hush like death should fall upon them whenever a word was dropped as to how many long months the cabinetmaker had been carving and polishing the magnificent bed Josiah had ordered from him. This being alone this last morning at Uncle William's was strangely a part, yet different from all of that. It was like being where birth was about to take place, or where the touch of death had only that minute descended ever so softly.

"Do you love Josiah?" Aunt Abigail said, coming in

lightly, as if she were afraid of disturbing something she could not name. "Because, if you do not. . . ."

Anyway, it was too late now, after all the weeks of Miss Sarah's sewing, and all the months of hewing and hauling that had brought the square house to stand as it did, facing the hill where the new college was. The oxen had strained beneath the yokes until the bows were split, the veins in their necks becoming knotted like ropes, and the workmen had strained themselves in another way, raising the heavy timbers into place — there was Cy Thorne, who would never do another day's work in his life, because one end of a log had slipped, throwing the whole weight of it upon him too suddenly and rupturing him. And there was Ab Pinder, whose hips had been crushed by a log rolling upon him, and John Jones, for whom the rest had dug for three days after the sides of the new well caved in and buried him. No, it was too late now, Amarila thought; whether she loved Josiah or not, she must go through with it. But how handsome he was, and how fine and clear his profile as he sat on the men's side of the church every Sunday morning. From her place on the other side, Amarila watched him cautiously, lest somebody should notice and talk be raised because she was not paying attention to the preaching. More than one girl had suffered public reprimand for less.

"Yes, I love him," she said, more to herself than to Aunt Abigail.

"Josiah Winfield is a good man," Aunt Abigail said. "He can drive a close bargain, but he gives liberally to the church, and just look at the college! The day may come when it shall be a great university, the way he says—like the fine ones back East where he got his own education."

She subsided against the tall post of the bed, coughing desperately into her second-best handkerchief. Amarila surveyed her anxiously, trying to remember her own mother who had coughed her life away in the smoky depths of a Conestoga wagon one summer night eighteen years ago, at the edge of this very village. But all that her mind brought back was the story of how the wagon had gone on, in a day or two, bearing her father and the load of equipment for the new home in the wilderness to the west. And of how her father had trusted her to the childless couple she had come to call Aunt Abigail and Uncle William. Her father had promised to return for her as soon as he had settled on land of his own and raised a crop and built a shelter. He never came. "He was a tall man with jet-black eyes," Aunt Abigail said. "Daniel Wing, his name was, but no relation to the Wings who live in town here. Your mother's name was Hannah. Her hair was pale gold, like the silk on corn in bottom land where the soil is extra rich."

Amarila's hair was gold too, but her eyes were her heritage from Daniel Wing who had driven into the west

one August morning, leaving his child behind in the care of strangers, leaving his wife with only a mound of fresh dark earth for cover. He had buried her beneath a wild cherry tree, and at that season the small purple fruit was falling. The wind swayed the long graceful boughs; some of the cherries dropped into the open grave and some were crushed by the spade that covered it again.

But from this, Amarila's mind turned to the new sleeves with the tiers of ruffles, so much prettier than the leg-o'-mutton ones, and how much more graceful the surplice fichus were than last year's straight line of buttons up the front. And now bonnets "scooped" so much more attractively, with more trimming to frame the face and less to cover the forehead. The strings were longer too, and those silly stiff nosegays had moved a trifle to one side.

Maybe it was wrong to think of matters quite so earthly, and of course it was wrong to ponder too long on Josiah Winfield, his handsome figure and his stylish clothing. He would have said so himself—but Amarila could not smother her pride in him; try as she might, his sleek hat with its elegant lines maintained a definite shape within her consciousness. Beneath the hat his well-formed head had a look to it that made her feel strange, as if something had come before her suddenly to frighten and surprise her. His shoulders were broad; she tried not to let her gaze descend from them toward the slender waist and

the full skirt of his coat, billowing beneath it, but in spite of herself, there she was looking at his hands—strong hands with long fingers. "Everything Josiah touches turns to money," Uncle William said. "Every dollar he gets hold of draws another dollar." When Josiah Winfield walked beneath the elms that bordered the principal street of the village, people would stand and watch him: he advanced with sure bold strides, as if he would no sooner step inside his bank than his dollars would start multiplying once again, before his very eyes. But Amarila was not thinking of Josiah's hands in that way; she was not even thinking of his clothing—carefully cut suits of beautifully woven fabric, such as gentlemen wore in the pages of *Godey's*. Josiah's coats and pantaloons were made for him in the East, or in Columbus or Cincinnati—not fashioned by the village tailoress, the way the other men's were. And he wore them with an air, knowing perfectly well that they set off his excellent figure. Amarila stood staring at her wedding finery, trying not to think of Josiah's hands on her own, or upon her shoulders as they had rested night before last while his deep blue eyes gazed down upon her. Maybe that had been wrong, to let him so much as touch her shoulders before their marriage, and Josiah must have thought so too, because his face had flushed all of a sudden and he had said, "Good-night, Amarila; sweet dreams."

I shall be a good wife to him, Amarila pledged herself

in the first light of the September morning. The air was sweet with woodsmoke and frost; even this early the women of the neighborhood were bustling about the summer kitchen where the wedding dinner was to be prepared. Amarila hoped that Aunt Abigail would not overdo: the cooking and baking had already gone on for three days now; that was why Aunt Abigail's cough was worse—it made her choke to stand before the big oven when the coals were being scraped out; she said the smoke went into her lungs. But the neighbors were good to help, and in an hour Aunt Abigail's own nieces would be here, coming by ox-cart from the farm on Brushy Run.

Not in the history of the village had there been a more important wedding. Nowhere in the village was there a house as fine as the one to which Josiah Winfield was to take his bride.

Yesterday Amarila's chests and linens had been carried there: the tablecloths of linen diaper she had so diligently spun and woven, the linen sheets, the blankets and the beautiful blue-sprigged dishes, her flax wheel and two big wool wheels, her loom and niddy-noddy and warping bars.

No, she had no right to stand here, a lump in her throat, a hand over the heart that thumped so frantically beneath her small young breast. In the summer it had been different, sitting under the sycamore tree sewing on the pillow cases. Josiah had been in the East then, in New York on business; the hour of their marriage had seemed

a long way off. The pillow cases themselves had meant no more than hours of weaving and stitching; they had seemed nearer to the flax in the neat clearings on the hillsides than to Josiah Winfield, six feet tall with black silk hair at his wrists—Josiah whose slightest touch had in it the qualities of the lightning which racked the beech woods always on the hottest August afternoons.

Amarila was sad with a grief she could not fathom, but recognized as if it were already a part of herself and had been for a long, long time. She would have been grateful for courage to visit her mother's grave, where the glossy leaves drifted from the wild cherry tree and lay as crimson upon the tufted earth as the splotches on Hannah Wing's blanket in the Conestoga wagon, with Daniel patting her shoulder and murmuring "Hush, hush," to Amarila. Maybe her mother would know about such sadness, but that did no good now: what good was a mother who had lain eighteen years under a wild cherry tree?

Last night Aunt Abigail had tried to speak but had failed. Aunt Abigail was seventy, anyhow, weak and ravished from slow consumption. And there could be no help from the neighbor women, moving capably over the worn brick floor of the summer kitchen. They whispered or tittered or broke down and wept into their aprons, a weary sort of weeping that was fear and anguish and resignation all blent into a vague, irrevocable wisdom that sealed their sisterhood.

"Hallie Rivers," one of them had said, drawing a row of pies, one by one, to the front of the oven, "was as pretty as Amarila, this time two years ago, wasn't she, Polly?"

"And hasn't stood up straight since little Jamie came," Polly said, cutting her sentence off short because Amarila stood in the doorway. "Darling, just look at these pies—for your wedding feast, yours and Josiah's. Everything, everything for you!"

And there were the three icy nights last winter when Mary Tidwell's screams had cut through the brittle air like sharp thin knives, close and quick, one after the other. And whisperings at last of how her baby had never been born at all; she had gone into spasms and died: the sled crunched lightly on the packed snow of Main Street as the funeral procession picked its way down the slope toward the burying ground, Absalom Tidwell staggering like a drunken man, staring at the cold blue sky, not seeing anything.

Mary Tidwell had been married in the spring, with woods violets in her hands, a wreath of tiny fragrant white ones about her head. She and Amarila and the other girls had gone into the woods for May-apple flowers, and bouquets of dogwood and wake-robin. And Mary had said, "Tomorrow is my wedding day. It will be the happiest day of my life."

Amarila shook out her new petticoats in exasperation,

and gathered together the articles she would need in dressing. When it was time, she must wash herself all over (the sun would be warm; it was not too late in the autumn to wash oneself thoroughly). At any rate, it was better to be busy than to go on like this, thinking and imagining. Her love for Josiah should be enough; there should be no question in her mind, nothing but humble joy that he had chosen her. For it was a young woman's duty to be obedient and humble. Her way was the way of her husband: before and beyond that, it was the way of God. And right in the Bible it said that women should bring forth children in sorrow. She would be dutiful. She would obey. And she would rebel neither in body nor in spirit. But maybe it was not utterly wicked to adore her new scoop so. Its green was that same delicate loveliness of earliest willow leaves, in April when rain came in sheets and the mill race ran over. She wondered if Josiah would think of that, when she had bound it over the misty sun of her yellow hair.

2

ALL MORNING long, dressed in checked linsey-woolsey, Professor [illegible]ainwright's children sat on the top rail of the fence that straggled along the side of the hill where the

college was, and wondered if the greater excitement lay behind them, where forty young gentlemen were entering upon the new year of college, or down the hill in the village where the wedding was about to happen: Amarila Wing was to become the wife of Josiah Winfield, for whom Father thanked God at family prayers every twilight right after supper, and for whom Father thanked God every morning when the students assembled for early worship. Every night when the four of them were ready for bed, the little girls in the poster, the little boys in the trundle-bed, they themselves knelt and prayed for Josiah Winfield, for was he not their benefactor and without him would they not be back in Cincinnati at this moment, where the smells of the city reeked from the streets, and where the cholera was more to be feared than the ague was here?

Rebecca Wainwright was eight years old, and for the life of her could not decide whether the young gentlemen were the more fascinating, with their tiny waists in the latest fashion, or whether there were the greater thrill in watching for a glimpse of Amarila, dressed ready for the wedding. Anyhow, she would have to go home in a little while to stitch her seam. Martin and Samuel were boys and need not stitch seams. Sometimes they had to hold yarn for Mother, because she did not have a swift, but that was easy work, not half so tiresome as stitching seams. Little Deborah was three-and-a-half, so she did

nothing at all, but she could recite the *Beatitudes,* and all the Books of the Old Testament. Not that she could say every name so plainly that it could be understood—names like *Deuteronomy,* for instance. But Deborah was so small and fat that it did not matter, and besides, all of them knew perfectly well what she was saying.

The young men in the bleak rooms of the tall frame college building might be reciting the Books of the Bible even now; from its open windows there came a persistent droning like the song of bees on summer days that now were like something just around a corner that would not be turned again for a very long time. There was a tree by the fence, and from it the beechnuts dropped invisibly and softly, making small noises on the leaves as they passed. Later in the day maybe hogs would come nosing for them. Down the hill some of the cattle wandered. Cattle could not come here because of the fence, but the bottom rail was high enough for hogs to slide under. All day the cattle wandered in the streets of the village, unless boys drove them into the hills to the north, bringing them home again in time for evening milking. Some of the yards had rail fences like this one, to keep the cattle out. In the village the principal street was always a sea of mud, broader, more formidable than a hog wallow, but exactly like one. Except in midwinter when it was frozen from side to side like the mill pond, but the mill pond did not matter because Rebecca was not old enough to skate there

and would not have been allowed if she were. In midsummer the street was not muddy either, unless there was a cloudburst or a thunder shower. In June the dust swirled from it like a great brown tent, enveloping the village.

There were not many trees on the hill where the college stood, one gaunt building and the president's house, both frame, both tall and grim and ugly. The trees had been cut to make room for the college, and another building was to be begun in the spring—a brick building; indeed, the bricks for it were already being made. The children looked across the village to Sugar Lump, a round knob of a hill on a level with this one. But the autumn haze and the woodsmoke from the village chimneys made the valley so wide that it seemed an expanse impossible to encompass, even in the mind, let alone bridge with the actual measure of small feet, hurrying beside the fences.

Now in the college building the young men might be undertaking the study of natural philosophy, which Father read until late each night, the wonderful oil lamp sputtering at his elbow. Josiah Winfield had oil lamps in the new house—a fine one on a table and two others on brackets on the walls, but there was a three-forked candlestick in the hall where the great staircase was. Josiah Winfield had brought some furnishings from the East, and among them was the figure of a girl, nearly naked, and in her hand a holder for candles, triple branched, the strangest, most exciting thing in the village. Father said

the deacons would pronounce it wrong and extravagant and worldly—as for himself he considered it a trifle vain, but there was no way of getting around what Josiah Winfield did. There might be a question, but in the end he was right, because everybody needed his money so badly. That was why it was right for Josiah to visit the wax museum in Cincinnati, where all sorts of effigies, proper and improper, were on display. As if it could ever be right for man to set up any manner of image for himself to admire: Grandmother Allyn said even a doll was wrong, but the children wrapped scraps of calico about corncobs or bits of whittled walnut and named them and loved them as if they lived and breathed.

Rebecca shifted her wiry body on the top fence rail and wished she were twenty and yellow haired like Amarila Wing, and could have her ears pierced and tiny gold hoops hung in them, and a pale green scoop bonnet like Mother said Amarila's wedding one was. But all she could do was say: "Debbie, don't squirm—you'll fall off," or, "Samuel! Don't pull the grasshopper's leg; you'll hurt him! There, there now, Debbie, Samuel didn't hurt him a bit. See, he's as good as ever; he's hopping away."

But Deborah shed a few large round tears anyhow. The fence rail was making red welts on the backs of her fat thighs even through her full skirt and petticoats and long linen drawers, but she was going to see Amarila go into her new house—yes, she was! Down the hill past

the cows, past the butternut tree, over two fences and across the street—*that* was where the house was, and if you held tight to the fence rail and bent forward, peering over the cows' backs and under the bottom branches of the butternut. . . . "Debbie, darling, look *out!*" Rebecca steadied her with a practiced hand. They might be along at any minute now—the bride and Josiah and all of their relatives and friends. Father would have been among them, but this was the opening day of college. Mother would have been there, but Baby Jonathan was only two days old. Mother lay white and tired in the big bed beside him.

Martin and Samuel kicked at the rails with their heels and thought it would be good fun if that red cow with the horns would come a little farther up the hill and set Rebecca and Debbie to screeching. It ought to be sport to watch them jump down off the fence, their skirts were so long they were apt to go sprawling. But the red cow stood chewing her cud; Martin and Samuel kicked their heels faster and faster. There were lots of butternuts on that tree halfway down the hill. In a few weeks the hard frost would touch them; then they would be ready to gather and spread to dry on the floor of the barn loft. That was a better butternut tree than the ones down the hill to the north. The women had cut too much bark off them to dye their yarn, in the spring when the bark colored a deep rich brown.

Behind them, from the tall frame building, the young men's voices rose and fell like spring wind in the beech grove where the branches were like harp strings of brittle silver.

"I can't wait," Debbie said. "How soon shall I see the bride, Rebecca? Tell me, Rebecca, how soon shall I see the bride?"

3

IN AUNT ABIGAIL'S summer kitchen the women bustled from stove to table and out, down the gulley to the spring house where milk stood in crocks set in the cool running water, and back again up the gulley, bearing milk and butter and clabber. As they moved back and forth their great skirts brushed one another's, and their tongues hastened ahead of their hands, making the most of the wedding day.

"Roasted turkey, roasted pig, roasted ox," Aunt Abigail said over and over, coughing a little at the end of each time. "Apple pie, huckleberry pie, pieplant pie. . . ."

At least she had an oven, if it was half a morning's work to get it fired ready to bake in. Over on Brushy Run her sister still cooked on the open hearth, hanging her

pots from the lug-pole and roasting her meat on the spit. Amarila was to have a stove, a fine newfangled one, but perhaps the old ways were best. Maybe Amarila's stove could never be depended upon any better than Josiah's lucifers with which he lit his pipe so proudly, and with what a flourish!

Peeping into the oven, Dulcie Harper said: "It always makes me cry just to think of it. A sweet young girl on her wedding day! And I fear for Amarila this night, as good a man as Josiah is and as pious—but he's been a grown man these many years, and is apt not to be patient, as young as she is."

Mrs. Jewett said: "Yes, he is a good many years older. Amarila is but a child."

They peered further into the oven, and wiped their tears with their aprons and once more exchanged those looks that are all the more mysterious for being too well understood. And over the hills and the village the September day advanced, dropping wild cherries on Hannah Wing's grave another time, though nobody had time today to think of Hannah Wing except vaguely, as one might remember that April followed March.

"Those are *her* spinning things Amarila is taking with her," Aunt Abigail said. "Not that Amarila will do much spinning under Josiah's roof, or weaving either—with all those pieces of cloth he is forever ordering brought from the East on the fast freight wagons. But when Daniel

Wing went on west that day, without even saying goodbye to his baby, there to the side of the house we found all those things—his wife's, I suppose, that he wanted Amarila to have. There never was anything carved out any prettier than that flax wheel; and Amarila can spin and weave, as much in a day as any woman in town. And Josiah has land south of town there and sheep on it that every spring have wool that has to be attended to, and every summer flax growing that ought not to go to waste."

"Yes," Dulcie said. "Amarila can tend to it properly, too. A girl always can afford to know how to do things, however well-off she marries."

"Bonny clabber," Aunt Abigail said. "Floating island, cider pudding. . . ."

She was so tired that sometimes a wonder came over her that she might last the day out, her coughing spells were so frequent and hurt her so; then she resolved that nothing like that should spoil Amarila's wedding day unless it were the will of the Lord—His will was mightier than hers; she was resigned that it should be. Besides, she reflected, the Lord could be depended upon to help her. Whenever she needed Uncle William he was taking a nap under the grapevine in the sunshine, his mouth wide open for the plump dark grapes to tumble into. Or if he was not there he was off somewhere in the village, one of a sizable group of old men who tapped canes and spoke vehemently of money matters; how hard times were

and what Van Buren ought to do about it, and how in these troubled days the state could not have elected a finer governor than Joseph Vance: or could it?

Once the women at the cooking spoke of the hard times and one of them said: "Yes, and look at the money that has gone into that house of Josiah Winfield's. Showing off, I say." But another woman brushed a hand over her mouth and said: "Remember where you are. They are likely to hear you. Josiah is a good man, and generous. Where would the town be without him?"

It was true, he had built the stone bank and the small frame schoolhouse and the large frame college building, and had set enough money in trust so that the president and professor could be paid for five years: that was a great deal to do for any town. And whether or not education was a good thing, the young men were there from all parts of the state, some of them walking, others travelling by stagecoach and canal boat and on horseback—any way to get there.

"It will fall through with," some people said, but Josiah Winfield said that colleges must be founded in the wilderness; that education had to creep toward the West or forever be denied it. And nobody could refute what he said because he had proved himself right so many times. Now if he said a dozen buildings should some day stand where the tall frame stood, and if he said a thousand young men should some day throng the hillside and

enter and leave the buildings, and that their sons should return in their time and their sons in theirs. . . . It was a dream, of course, but Josiah Winfield's dream was as sane as any. One of his dreams had helped build the canal and another had brought the railway within thirty miles of the village. Besides, he knew what was going on in the world outside: he subscribed to the *New York Herald*, and as a banker had even had correspondence with two presidents—with Jackson over the wild-cat banks, and with Van Buren over the specie circular. Not a man, surely not a *young* man in the Middle West knew more about banks and money than Josiah Winfield, and it was a shame that his own bank should be closed today of all days. But the bank was closed; it was impossible that it should be, and hardest of all to believe when, in passing the window, Trask, Josiah's clerk, could be seen just the same as ever, perched on his stool, his nose not six inches above the thick, open account books. Still, there was the notice on the door as it had been for a whole week now: Winfield's Bank was closed and the wedding was to take place in spite of it, for, as Josiah had pointed out, nothing was to be gained by waiting, now that the house was finished and ready to be lived in. And, to be sure, there was Josiah's word that there was no cause for worry—no doubt the doors would be open next week at the latest. In a few days he would receive advice from New York and Wash-

ington: letters were slow in arriving from New York and Washington, as everybody well knew.

Yet it was terrible for a trouble like that to be hanging over the wedding day. Better black clouds in the sky, the women thought, fearing for their homes, fearing for Josiah and Amarila. Better for rain to fall on the wedding guests than for dishonor to descend on the head of a new household.

But let the bride be happy. And let the groom be handsome in his glorious silk hat, worldly vanity that it was.

"If the bank stays closed," Dulcie Harper said, "Amarila will spin for herself, and weave too. Not that I shouldn't like to weave myself, with as light a loom room as she has in the new house."

She was not really thinking of the new house at all, but of how certain people would criticize the pretty things Amarila was taking there, especially the sweet little fly-screens for the table dishes; there were those who would pronounce them a giddy fancy, but it was *so* tiresome to be forever shooing as women had always to do at meal-time. Nor was it convenient to keep the center of the table swathed with a cheesecloth veil draped from a cake stand, and be perpetually reaching under it for whatever was wanted. As for the three-tined forks, they were a vanity surely, with two tines sufficient for any person to spear his food with.

Acc. No: 1493.

Outside the window, back in the woodlot, there was the soft commotion of wild pigeons rising, making off into the deeper woods for the day. This is a beechnut year, Dulcie told herself; there are more wild pigeons in beechnut years. And she remembered a wedding feast in her childhood, when the boys had gone out at night and with nets gathered the sleeping pigeons from where they roosted on the lowest branches—hundreds of them, that there might be enough for the feasting. Turkey and goose today, she thought, and beef and pork and smoked pork. And she knew that times had changed even in her memory; the country was not as wild as it once was. It was harder now to bag as many turkeys, or even squirrels, in a day. What Josiah Winfield said was true: some day the wilderness would be gone, and with it all the signs and creatures of the wilderness. There would be cities close together, as there were in the East, and railways built all the way between them, as one already was between New York and Washington—or so Josiah Winfield said, who had seen it and ridden on it. And there would be sidewalks the whole distance along the main street of the town, so that one need not wade in the mud and spoil one's footwear—stout board sidewalks to keep one up out of the wet, high and dry.

There was a flutter in the doorway where Aunt Abigail had been tasting sauce from a long-handled spoon.

"The Reverend Ortman has come," Mrs. Jewett said.

"To comfort and strengthen Amarila," Miss Sarah said, though she was supposed to be in the bedroom, taking the final stitches in Amarila's apparel.

Even the roasts in the great oven sizzled more softly. Even the kettle lids rose and fell with a sort of reverence. For a while now not even the stewing and boiling could go forward with the bubble and sputter of a moment ago.

4

THE HOUSE stood on the south side of the principal street, and all the time it was being built the villagers would stop before it and discuss the whole business: the timbers that were going into it and the thickness of the walls, whether or not the windows were set where the light should be caught to the best advantage, and why Josiah Winfield had not picked himself a city bride, considering his ideas about education and progress, and foolishness nobody ever bothered to think of the second time.

Amarila was a pretty girl, they said, but not any too hearty-looking. Still, she was never ill, and even while she was a child too young for reading-school, her needles could click off footing with the fastest knitters in the village. It could easily be that Josiah Winfield knew what he was doing. He usually did.

When the house was finished it was the only one in the village with plaster and room-paper throughout. Everyone thought the parlor paper the prettiest: it was hand blocked in a design that was a landscape in miniature; in the ceiling, groups of gilt stars represented the constellations. The planks of the floor had been planed to a satin smoothness and polished until Amarila's wedding slippers would be mirrored in them. Beyond the front door was a great hall, and in this the staircase ascended in wide and graceful beauty. On one of his eastern journeys Josiah Winfield had seen a certain staircase in Virginia, and this one was like it to the last lavish curve, the final gleaming baluster. He had feared at first that those stairs could not be duplicated here in the western wilderness, where every other house had box stairs, if indeed there were any stairs at all. But examining them upon the morning of his wedding day, he was satisfied. They were as he desired. They were fit for his bride to ascend on her way to the vast bedchamber over the parlor. They were fit for his son to descend, a year hence, on the damp, downy pillow of the newly born. They were even finer stairs than he had meant them to be, or than he had ever imagined they should be.

When the men of the village saw Josiah Winfield standing in front of his house an hour or so before his wedding, they came no closer to him. They would have liked to; there were always matters worth discussing with

Josiah Winfield, and today was of triple importance—the bank was closed; the college had opened; it was Josiah Winfield's wedding day. But the men turned from him and moved along the street in the other direction. They were afraid of him because he was young and because he was educated and because he believed in education for everybody, and because he was as much at home in a cigar divan as in church, yet the church did not dare to censure him for it. They envied him because of his beaver hat and because of the fit of his light grey pantaloons and the shape of his handsome limbs beneath them. They envied him vaguely because it was the day of his marriage, though each of them, except Dore Patton, had a wife at home, and most of them one or two in the growing burying ground at the bottom of the hill. They saw him tap his stick on the board walk that led from the street to the front door of his house, and without being told they knew what he was thinking, and they knew, moreover, that it would come to pass because he had decided that it should. They feared and admired and resented him as he stood there in the September sunlight. Once he lifted his hat and the sun glinted his hair with the sheen of a ripe buckeye. And they knew that if their own hair was set in order with bear's grease or bull's marrow, Josiah Winfield's was laid smooth with balm of Columbia, and that the blended fragrance which was elusively part of his personality was not only that but

also the expensive Old West India bay water with which he kept himself sprinkled, and Lubin's almond paste with which he shaved.

Yet for all this they knew that he was not a dandy; they knew he could lift a log with the stoutest of them, and that he could make a speech as well as any lawyer in Columbus or deliver a prayer as eloquently as the best preacher in the village. Even as they watched him they wheeled to a sound from the hill above them, and Josiah Winfield turned too—the college bell! Surely a college should succeed if it had a bell, in a time when bells had to be brought from Philadelphia with incredible effort and expense. There were already bells in two of the church belfries, but there was a difference between summoning a community to worship and young men to the learning of Latin and Greek and human physiology and natural philosophy and rhetoric and belles-lettres.

Listening to it, Josiah Winfield wondered what his son would think, when it came his turn to hear it. It was a good bell, clear and strong, with a note as musical as a wood dove's and somehow quite as sad. Everything about Josiah was good and strong, just as he intended it should be, and everything he purchased was strong and sure, and the house he had erected was staunch and secure and would be standing just as it was a hundred years from his wedding day. He was certain of these facts because they were entirely within his power and the power of his money, and

he had come to realize that here was a nation in which the power of money was to be mightier than the power of money in any country heretofore. He was a strong man, but he realized that it would not be necessary for his son to be as strong, and perhaps a grandson would need no strength at all, except in his head and his pocket. Muscles would mean less in a land where all the trees had been felled and all the ground been broken. Minds would mean more when there was opportunity to accomplish through thinking, and money could assume its full importance only when it could purchase as the mind willed. There must be shops, of course, and the day would come when most of the needs of the home could be purchased in the community; the cloth, the thread, the flour, the sugar, even butter and milk and eggs—how people would laugh at that! And he laughed himself, remembering that at this minute there were two hundred eggs in his wedding cake, waiting for his wedding. It was good to be thirty-two and about to marry. By thirty-two one had arrived at a sort of mean to judge the world by, and by then most of the issues of life one could not decide for oneself had miraculously been decided for one. It was a glorious day and life was good. Yes, life was good and God was good. If only the bank were open! And if times were but a little more inclined toward the better than the worse, with the population becoming restive and overcritical—so many tales of Van Buren's extravagancies and so many

stories of all sorts that only served to rub the people the wrong way. . . . Dangerous days. But there was nothing dangerous about today, with its mild blue sky and mellow sun and faint hint of frost and turning leaves. Less than a month and wild grapes would be ripe; deep purple on the forest vines, bright crimson on the trees. He had already seen to it that a goodly store of apples waited in the dark fruit cellar; potatoes were there too, and before long he would set the men on his farm to butchering: that was the way it should be, a strong house to eat and sleep in; a house big enough to hold a man's sustenance, the essentials of his comfort and the relics of his travels; —his wife and his children; that was right and good.

Down the street he had noticed men turn toward the hill with the first note of the bell he had had brought from Philadelphia. That too was good, and as it should be. In this wilderness there were many who would need persuading toward knowledge, just as there were inevitably those who had to be helped toward faith, reminded of it, as it were, each winter with the revivals. Another year, ten years—it would not do to expect too much or anticipate too far, but other colleges had survived, Eastern colleges had survived. His vision saw great trees on the barren hill, cleared too well and too ruthlessly. Among the trees fine buildings should stand, brick buildings with housing for the students in as many of them as need be; the lower floors should be used for classrooms. There

should be a professor to devote his whole time to the dissemination of mathematical knowledge, and another to expound the precepts of theology, for the college would be definitely religious. There was a crying need of God so long as the country should remain a wilderness, and after that perhaps there was never a limit to the wilderness within men's minds.

Josiah Winfield stood before his house and thought of God, doubting His methods a little, after the manner of men who have read much, believing more than he doubted, in the way of men who have lived close to life and death. For Josiah Winfield was born in Kentucky in 1805 and by the time he was grown he had faced death many times, and he had learned too to be no longer afraid of life.

His elegant pantaloons were strapped tightly beneath his insteps, and the cloth was drawn smoothly across his stomach where the bottom of his waistcoat clung as if it were grateful to adorn him. The men of the village would have plenty to say about him, but not now while he was before their eyes and they were afraid of him. Now there was nothing to say, because his very perfection had already said it all.

Within his house everything was ready as he had willed it: walnut and cherry were polished in whatever shape they had been fashioned, beds and tables and chairs, woodwork and mantels and staircase, shelves and doors, all but a few months, or years at most, removed

from the heart of the forest. After all, the house held but a few things which Amarila was bringing with her. The spinning wheels of Hannah Wing who was asleep on the hillside, and the tall loom which her daughter was destined never to use again, and a coffee box which one day a great-granddaughter was to hide love letters in. There were the jars of fruit and pickle, to be sure, but they were more the share of Aunt Abigail than of Amarila, and there was all the linen diaper Amarila had spun, but it had come from Uncle William's flax and it was he who had cut and dried and rippled it all and pounded the strikes and finally hetchelled what was left, before it was ready for the flax wheel.

Josiah and Uncle William always argued about politics, for Uncle William was a Whig and considered it next to the end of the world for the country to have a Democratic president. But Josiah Winfield was a Democrat and believed in Van Buren, whatever was said against him. He kept his letter from him on top of his desk, weighted with a hickory cube carved with Niagara Falls in miniature. It was becoming extremely fashionable to take one's bride there on a wedding excursion—perhaps next summer, if Amarila was not too delicate to travel. But he knew very well that by summer they should not be going to Niagara. It was indeed unfortunate that business conditions prevented the journey now.

5

PROFESSOR WAINWRIGHT stood at the front of the bare classroom, behind a table raised so prominently upon a dais that it was in fact a pulpit. In his right hand he clutched a ruler, and his left was bent far back with the weight of the book open against its outspread palm, his thumb keeping it open to the place. Before him the young gentlemen waited with faces upon which no sort of expression lodged. One of them toyed with his pen, and Professor Wainwright knew that it was his duty to take him to task for it; it was a turkey quill anyhow, and turkey quills scratched twice as noisily as goose; he must mention that point to his classes and make it plain that only goose quills might be brought for purposes of inscribing essays and themes: there was noise enough in the classroom as it was, goodness knew.

The young men sat on long gaunt benches which tipped easily and were inordinately hard to sit upon. Classes were to last an hour and a quarter, and the young men despaired of their capacity for concentration. In any event, any restless movements would be foolhardy: clothing was difficult to come by, with prices as they were and money scarce, and education was as yet a luxury of the

spirit; the body must fare as best it could. There were rooms for some of them in the upper floors of the college building, but board at the college commons was costly, a dollar a week, and twenty-five cents extra for washing. It was cheaper to board in clubs, making the cost only about fifty cents for each man, and the poorest had even thriftier ways of faring: it was easy enough to build a shack south of town along the creek, where it was often possible to wheedle a cup of milk from a straying cow or to catch a half-wild chicken that scratched in the open field. There were many ways of getting along and of nourishing oneself beyond danger of starvation.

The students faced Professor Wainwright and his lips moved and words fell from them and the students listened, but actually he was not addressing them at all but was pondering upon the Will which had brought him here. If it were Divine, well enough, but too many other elements entered in. First, he had been tempted by the salary made possible by Josiah Winfield's bounty, then there was the vanity of association with a growing college, then there had been the fear of the city's recurring pestilences and the springtime terror of the widened river which ran yellow with mud and left acres of silt in its path and fevers and tremblings in its wake. But his wife was not thriving here: a few nights ago she had required a doctor for childbirth, when in Cincinnati she had done excellently with only the neighbor women, and once all

alone, and another time with no one but himself. She had not come through it so well this time either, though the baby was a big lusty boy—the doctor said if he could have bled her earlier. . . . But a doctor for childbirth was at best bad business, immodest and unwomanly, and besides there was the expense—five dollars! Especially in times like these. "If character is a manifestation of the inner workings of the soul," his lips said, "for what should we strive in our daily associations with God and our fellow men? Haynes, you may reply."

But just then the time was up and above them the bell swung back and forth with an enormous clatter, as if the building itself were being shaken by the corners. The first day of college, and forty young men in their places—what an occasion!—what a Heaven-sent opportunity for teacher and pupils alike! Down the hill, under the beech tree, Professor Wainwright saw a flash of brown and knew that his children were on the fence awaiting a glimpse of the wedding party. Bless their innocent hearts, his mind said, while his stomach hoped that the neighbor women had at least some hasty pudding stirred up toward his dinner. Little attention he would get though, as hard as he worked and prayed, for if ever a man was of no importance in the world it was while his wife lay in bed with a new baby beside her, and if ever women were of no use in the kitchen it was when a wedding was going on and there was plenty to gossip about. Last night at his

desk, trying to pursue his studies, what kind of talk had he heard coming out of the bedroom?—"Volkamenica japonica for may-you-be-happy, daphiodora for sweets-to-the-sweet." Amarila Wing's bouquet! — how lightly women's minds brushed the roots of life. For there was his wife at death's door only a matter of hours ago, and there were the women who had seen how the doctor had had to take a pint of her blood to save her, yet all they could talk of was wedding posies! Yes, it was sadly true that female intelligence was incapable of cultivation: he had tried with Jane but it was easy to see that always her fancy drifted elsewhere. There was no time to read she said, and she had no strength for thinking; as if thought were a question of strength or of anything but giving free rein to the tumult within one, tumult which was forever a question, seeking its answer in truth. Why, so far as he was concerned there was no time for anything else, but meanwhile the women twittered about bouquets and syllabubs and camisole patterns and whether or not eight rows of purling were enough for a mitten-wrist. As if anybody cared or as if it mattered. As if anything mattered but a bell pealing out over the valley, and forty young men on hard board benches, worrying about pantaloon-seats and splinters and the fathomless depths of knowledge behind that high white brow before them.

6

"Is MY bonnet on straight?" Aunt Abigail said, giving herself a shake. "Do I really look well enough?—but it doesn't matter, with a bride to be looked at. Come, Sarah; Maria! Where is William? Dust his hat off, somebody. Find him his cane. Mercy sakes! Now if I get to cough-ing. . . ."

But now she had her best handkerchief in her hand, and had just taken a large dose of balsam of liverwort, unexcelled for lung distress or pain in the chest; maybe she would not cough and maybe she could get through the wedding and the whole day, though tonight was go-ing to be difficult, with Amarila gone for the first time since she had come to them: where *was* Daniel Wing anyhow, to never return for his child the way he had promised? Not that it mattered now or had ever mattered, as sweet a child as Amarila had been, and as devout and righteous a young woman.

"Oh, I can never bear it," Miss Sarah said. "That lovely young angel out in the night alone. . . ." Meaning that Amarila was not to be alone, hinting at potentialities too dire, too terrible for mention, and all of them were concerned with men and were the fault of men, and of Josiah Winfield in the flesh and in especial.

"Stop snivelling, Sarah!"

"What's the trouble, what's the trouble?" Uncle William said from the doorway. "The stage is in; the mail is in; they're over at the tavern right now, sorting it out. Maybe there will be letters for Josiah, and anyway my newspapers. . . ."

"Oh, he's gone!" Aunt Abigail said. "Right when it's time for the wedding. Call him back, one of you; catch him, bring him here! Dear me, dear me—there's that misery in my chest, just as I expected."

7

IN THE eighteen-thirties every Christian marriage was dedicated with prayer, and as if the Reverend Ortman had not prayed long enough with Amarila in the morning or with Josiah Winfield an hour later or over them both in the afternoon, when night had come the couple knelt by the wide polished bed and beseeched Heaven for strength and courage and fortitude by which to live their lives together, guide the children who should come of their union, and establish for their household a reputation of good favor in the community.

Amarila thought it perhaps not entirely nice for Josiah

to speak so openly of children, and indeed he had made her blush a week ago when he had spoken of "the line of sons which shall descend from us." But she kept her mind sternly concerned with the prayer, knowing it for a reprehensible transgression to be glad now more than ever that she need not wear curl papers. Especially glad, because there had been mention of them from the pulpit, how giddy they were and how sinful it was to be so occupied with pitfalls of the flesh.

"Amarila, Amarila," Josiah said, turning to her, raising her from her knees with strong firm arms.

A fire burned on the hearth because the warm sun had silvered into frost. Outside there was a cold thin moon, the sickle moon, Josiah said, in which all the last fall fruits must be cut down. Its light was pale and aloof over the village and upon the hills around it. The stars were small and far away. The world was vast, Amarila thought, and this house was vast, and she was tiny and alone within it. Even Josiah seemed far away now that she was so close to him, and her own person seemed to her like the body of a stranger and Josiah was miraculously all the men of the wilderness, great-muscled men who hewed logs and squared them with sharp short strokes of the broadaxe, as well as slim handsome men in tall beavers, riding in the stage, the wrists of their coat sleeves very narrow and tight so that it seemed as if their hands could not possibly be drawn through them. Then there were

men like the Reverend Ortman, with God in their faces; the new Professor Wainwright was one of these, and it was a good thing his wife had not died the other night because the wedding would have been spoiled if she had: death has no place in a wedding day, nor the joy of marriage any right in the hour of death. In Josiah Winfield's bed Amarila was conscious that all the world was peopled with men and that a woman's corner was only a small and uncertain one. But while she was conscious of it, she was aware that the knowledge need never be more than a fact to her; Josiah would take care of her. Josiah was all the world, all the men in the world fused together. She was no longer afraid of him, but she wept into the huge pillow of down from the breasts of Aunt Abigail's white geese. This was love, she was sure, and now she knew love when it came to meet her and recognized it as she would have recognized sorrow and happiness. "Josiah, Josiah," she said, and he wiped her tears with his fine cambric handkerchief and told her about the shops in Cincinnati and of how he would take her there some day, and perhaps even to New York and Washington. The room was hung with the blue mist of burned-out candles, and Amarila said to herself, this is happiness, this is marriage, and then she was afraid again all of a sudden, and Josiah said, "Oh bother, my love, don't cry!" But she cried all the more and hid her face in the tucked bosom of his nightshirt.

Then after a long time, when the candle smoke had cleared away and there was left in the room nothing but the frosty silver of the moon, they began to plan for the future and for their life together, because now it had been both blessed and established but neither of them was ready for sleep.

Josiah told how he had grown up in the woods and how he had seen enough of the forest and its swift fierce reckonings: from now on his days would be lived as civilly as possible; he was done with trees from which the panthers leaped and from behind which death might come skimming as lightly as a summer swallow. He had finished with those things long ago when he had come north out of Kentucky; now there were no Indians left around here except a few old peaceful ones or one or two who had forsaken their race and married among the whites. Fear and loneliness were all but vanished from this part of the country: the frontier was no longer here, but westward; Cincinnati was a city now, and Columbus a big thriving town of nearly five thousand inhabitants. And he told Amarila part of his dream about the college, and of how they should both live to see the hill covered with the manifestations of that dream—buildings and students and the paraphernalia of study; there must be a library, and a conservatory of music. Amarila should see that it would come to pass.

"But will it not require a great amount of work and

money?" she said timidly, knowing very well that work and money were the quality and substance of Josiah Winfield, only his labor was the thinking kind, and not a matter of muscle as with men like Ab Pinder, who would never be able to work again now or even so much as set a foot on the floor. Amarila sighed for Ab and for Cy Thorne, because all their youth and strength was one with this house in which she and Josiah lay with their bodies warm with the length of each other's. The very water she had drunk from the pewter cup on the stand at the bedside was unforgettably part of John Jones, because the well had been dug out again after the cave-in; it would have been a waste of time not to go on deep down with it, after they had moved all that earth again to find his body.

But it was not good to dwell too long on such thoughts. One, two, three more days and she would walk to church with Josiah, turning from him at the door as the other women turned from their men; and it had been bad enough to be separated from him other Sabbaths, but now how could she bear the width of the aisle between them? Her bonnet was too gay for meeting; Aunt Abigail had said so right along: she must get out her black one for Sunday, but Josiah had said that in the cities any number of females attended church in bonnets brighter than her own; that in Cincinnati the most prominent ladies in town actually wore blue or pink satin ones to the revivals, and

from his seat in the gallery he had seen the huge shining splotches of them right up in front on the anxious benches —vanity, vanity. But she *wished* she might wear her new green one to church; the black made her face so pale. Josiah would not wish her to look *too* pale. She had heard of dreadful girls who reddened their cheeks with dampened scraps of cloth which had been boiled in pokeberry-and-alum. How wicked they must be: she could never do anything like that—never! But there was a pink thread in the border of her best shawl. Surely it was not wrong to hope that it might lend a bit of color to her face.

She was so sweet, so childlike, in her lace-edged nightcap, that not until tomorrow would Josiah tell her that the bank really was suspended; that neither he nor anyone else knew when it would open its doors again.

It was enough tonight that these good things had come to pass: this house was tight against the world and there was love within it and the fear of God, and the long peace that descends when a fire has burned low.

Downstairs, on the parlor table, was one of Josiah's gifts to Amarila: *THE WEDDING PRESENT, A Token to the Bride from the Bridegroom; containing Dew Drops on Conjugal Love from the Pens of the Most Eminent Authors.* He would read aloud from it on winter evenings and the afternoons of rainy Sabbaths, as through the spring and summer he had read from *THE GIFT,* with which he had presented her at Christmas—how beautiful

and instructive the plates were: *Death of the Stag*, engraved by Tucker, and Cheney's *A Portrait of Miss Kemble*. Amarila did not much care for *Smuggler's Repose;* it seemed too bold a depiction for the parlor table, but Josiah thought it the best of them all, and in fact considered last year's edition of *THE GIFT* superior to any of those before it, especially Mr. Irving's contribution and those of Miss Leslie and Mr. Simms.

Upstairs, in Amarila's jewel box was another token of Josiah's affection—a breastpin of gold doves with pearl eyes, twined together by a wreath of laurel. It was so lovely, the very pain of thinking of it was more than Amarila could bear. She clung to Josiah, shaking with sadness and fearful joy.

Now there was no sound at all in the room. It was so still that a shuffle in the dark somewhere was at first a part of the silence, then it was louder, then it was a step downstairs before the front door, and then silence again, and the rattle of acorns on the roof of the portico; then it was a knock loud and clear, square and solid in the middle of the walnut door.

"Josiah!" Amarila said, sitting up straight in the great bed. "Josiah, what can that be?"

"Sickness, perhaps," Josiah said. "The day may have been too much for your Aunt Abigail."

"She was coughing," Amarila said, "and she looked badly. Hurry, hurry, Josiah: see who it is!"

It was like a bad dream, that anything should demolish their peace. Amarila felt the soft warmth of the hollow where their bodies had sunk deep in the feather bed and she sensed the huddled fragrance of the blanket she had woven of the whitest fleece and cross-stitched in the corner: *Amarila Wing, May 15, 1837.* She saw her small feet touch the floor and felt her fingers pull her slippers upon them; Josiah was already on the stairs, his nightshirt bulging the pantaloons he had drawn on in haste. The knocking continued. Now it was twice as hard, pushing and beating, like fists and boot heels, down, down, down on the resisting wood. "Josiah!" Amarila shrieked; "— don't go! Don't open the door!" No sickness of the body had ever prompted that sound. Something inexplicably dreadful stood outside in the moonlight. Josiah! Josiah!

But it was only Wendell Field when the door was unbolted. That was all right, if it was a strange hour for any man of the village to raise a commotion like that. Sometimes when a fellow stayed too late at the tavern. . . .

Amarila was on the stairs, her hand shielding the candle, her other hand lifting her nightdress ever so slightly, that her feet might find the steps, one after the other.

"Go back, Amarila!" Josiah said. "Get back, there!"

Now she could see Wendell's face, red for all the grey of the sickle moon, and he talked in a torrent with islands of oaths: "—my money, your bank, my children, this fine

house here. . . . Those damn' canals. . . . *My* money, Josiah Winfield. . . . You robber, you thief, you. . . ."

"You aren't yourself, Wendell," Josiah said. "I tell you, man, you don't know what you're saying." And he tried to push the door shut against Wendell, straining upon it with all his might, but the other man was strong with the strength of fury, and came tumbling into the hall, halfway off his balance. Then Amarila screamed out across the wide cold night and the hills caught the thin last note of her voice and made an echo of it.

"China and silk," Wendell Field shouted, "—and posy-flowers all the way from the city! And my money locked up in your bank, or down East there—God knows. The country's full of dogs like you—one of 'em's in the White House and one of 'em's right here in a shirt-tail—but you won't eat off gold plates like Van does, not if I. . . ."

"Oh," Amarila cried, "oh, oh, oh!"

There were shouts in the darkness now, and lights in neighboring windows, and the small faint creak of candle-lanterns swinging as men ran. Josiah did not even sigh as Amarila cradled his head close against her. Her little night shawl fell down over the bright spot on his breast and the fringe of it grew red with all his life and beauty.

BOOK TWO

WING WINFIELD'S father died the night he was conceived, and his mother on his three-months birthday. As a boy he was so lonely that even his smile was dour, like the smiles of old men who must force an acid attempt at levity. He spindled to manhood under the obsession that everybody in the world was dead and he alone was left to inhabit it. All about him were shadows, and the shadows of Josiah and Amarila Winfield, and of Aunt Abigail, who had failed to cough herself to death after all, but had died of a fall down the polished stairs one night when little Wing had croup; and even of Uncle William, a deaf cross old man who survived until Wing was fourteen—all of these were of stouter substance than the people who came to care for him, one after the other: Miss Sarah Matthews who hugged and kissed him until he could bear it no longer and finally kicked her in the shins and told her to get out of the house; and all the others, an endless procession who saw that the furniture was dusted, and the carpets taken up and beaten every April, and that he never went barefoot before May Day,

however warm the weather, and that his woolens went on the first of October, no matter what.

There was a shaft of granite in a fenced square behind the college buildings, and on it was his father's name and a sentence from Proverbs: "The glory of young men is their strength." Sometimes Wing would sit on the base of the shaft and wonder about his father. His mother slept down the hill past the Town Hall, in the village burying ground. Wing never learned why she was not beside his father.

As in a dream he let the shadows stalk his memory, and part of it was not memory but the indefinable something that is handed on from one generation to another. Already there were young green lichens on the shaft, with frail grey fringe around them. Sometimes Wing wept at sight of them, because he was afraid of what time was doing to his father, if it had done so much to the stone which bore his name.

From the lips of the village he heard a hundred versions of how his father had died, but most of the story was the same: it was only that it varied in the telling. He never crossed the threshold of the house without visioning his mother crouched there in the sickle moonlight, her shawl splotched with crimson, the tip of one yellow braid dripping life blood on the floor.

Miss Sarah would say: "Let that child alone. He's too puny to hear that. It gives him night sweats."

One of Aunt Abigail's nieces lived in Uncle William's house now, and the village had risen behind the house and beside it so that Amarila would not have known it for the scene upon which she had looked out on her wedding morning. The stumps were gone, and where land had been newly cleared then, now there were houses. Vines had had time to grow up over the doorways, and hollyhocks beside the dooryard fences. There were sidewalks along the wide main street.

On both sides of the street, in the block where the stores stood, were hitching rails—wooden posts with wooden crossbars. There were more horses now, and fewer oxen to be seen in town. Once in a while, when there was a building to be moved or stone to be hauled, they came plunging along on small cloven feet, their strength against the bows as in the old days. Wing watched them with interest and in his mind made a picture of his grandfather driving into the west. But Daniel Wing was as good as forgotten in the village; only a few remembered that once he had stopped there briefly, and why; and with each season Hannah Wing's grave retreated farther into the earth and was all but lost within a tangle of mullein and Queen Anne's lace and teasel. Nobody else had been buried there, though the village graveyard was nearly full. The college buried its own on the western hill where the sun set. Besides Josiah Winfield, Professor Lynch lay there, and a middle-aged instructor in botany, and a white-

could survive another. The president, who was also a minister, went up and down the state speaking before mass meetings and the congregations of his denomination. And each September the college opened its doors again and the pigeons flew back to the belfry because there were young men on the hilltop, trudging slowly with thick books under their arms, or running and yelling as boys do when school is out. 1857 was a desperate year, and that was the year in which Wing stepped rather bashfully into the president's office one Monday morning and made the gift. When it was time for him to be offered public thanks for it, nobody could find him. He had slipped out of chapel while the president voiced ponderous appreciation, of which three quarters were directed toward Wing Winfield, and the other quarter more or less toward God.

When the village got over talking about that, he walked home from church one night with Louanna Wainwright, a year younger than himself and all dimples and blushes. That was the first time Wing had walked with a girl, and the first thing he did was bump his knee on the horse trough, hard, so that the slimy water ran over the side of the trough and down the leg of his trousers. Louanna laughed, and Wing almost laughed too; then he remembered himself and scowled instead. The rest of the way he was afraid to speak to Louanna.

2

ALL THE men of the village wore beards now, for Mr. Dickens had visited America in 1842, his face decorated with the Boz locks a whole nation must imitate. But by the time Wing noticed the first faint down on his own cheeks, the professors were wearing more than a fringe; their beards covered their throats and hid the V of their waistcoats. By his eighteenth birthday Wing had a beard too, the same shining chestnut of his father's hair, but with more of a curl, as if Amarila had left him that and no more, out of her own pale beauty.

His friend Rand's beard was black, and Wing felt his own too light, too silky, in comparison. Rand was so handsome, so much of a man for his twenty-two years, that Wing felt humble and inarticulate and childish in his presence. But when he was with Rand he was no longer lonely: the world was full and running over with kindness and companionship and mercy. Together they pledged their hearts to God and their labors to the cause of Christian education, perusing the Scriptures and the classics alike for what they sought, but were never certain they had found. They would lie for hours across Rand's bed in the brick dormitory, staring out into the young

elms beside it. When they were silent they could hear the pigeons scolding low in their feathery throats, and one day Wing noticed that the ivy had laid one thin green finger on the stone sill of the window. "So it has grown this high," he said, and Rand said, "What did you say, Wing?" and Wing said, "The difficulty of Christian scholarship is this: science can shake the structure of the soul." Rand said, "You are right," and after that day Wing became more and more afraid to think deeply. Rand studied for the ministry, practicing his first sermons before Wing, and sometimes Wing would tremble because Rand's voice was so clear and strong, delivering his beliefs from the remotest depths of his being; but nothing he said made any difference to Wing who was aware only of vague discomfort within himself, and of the power of Rand's voice, like a rich-toned bell hidden deep in his body. There were two literary societies, the Euclidian and Homeric, whose members competed with one another in debate and essay and oratory. Rand won in every competition. A row of blue ribbons hung above his bureau, and in June, 1856, he was awarded a five-dollar gold piece for an oration entitled "The Intellectual Approach to God."

Louanna Wainwright looked at Rand the same way Wing did, always sitting in the front row at chapel when he was to make a speech. That was one thing Wing had against her: it was easy to see that she was crazy about

Rand. Too easy. Sometimes he and Rand would be walking together on the campus and Louanna would be strolling in the path ahead of them, so slowly that they could do nothing in the world but catch up with her and all three proceed together, one too many always, and the third person, which Wing felt to be himself, had to step aside into the grass and make his own way through it, watching his feet every minute because there were stones at the edge of the path and he was continually stubbing his toe and stumbling. At such times he wondered what was the use of it all, and made up his mind to hate Rand, knowing quite definitely that he could not, and made up his mind to hate Louanna, but she would put her hand on his sleeve and say, "Come to supper, Wing. We're going to have charades afterward, and maybe we can coax Professor Burke to do his conjuring tricks. Do say you'll come!"

So Wing could not hate Louanna, and in the evening the Wainwrights' sitting room was very cosy, with the mellow glow of the lamp on the brick-red damask of the table cover. Professor Wainwright always retired to his study after an hour, but his wife was there and Miss Rebecca, a plump cheerful spinster Wing considered a hundred years older than himself, because she could remember the day of his birth and the day of his parents' wedding and could describe his mother's bouquet and her green satin bonnet. . . . Yes, Miss Rebecca must be old indeed to have sat on a fence rail then, waiting for the

inverted over their heads, with only a round of writing paper to save them a drenching. An egg in a bottle, smoke held in a bowl, a pigeon's feather that would not leave the ceiling. . . . Bravo, Professor Burke! Impossible. Superb.

February's damp chill crept in in spite of the burning oil and crackling beech logs. The clock on the mantel ticked slowly, slowly, as if waiting for the half opened calla lily on its glass face to burst into fuller bloom. Behind the glass the pendulum moved out of sight beneath the painted myrtle on the left, then the spray of laurel at the right. Back and forth, back and forth. Behind the clock Professor Wainwright's will nestled against the warm wall; behind its door, where the weights were, but just not letting them touch, was a small hobnailed glass with silver coins in it. Had Jane Wainwright any need of writing a will, this silver would have been all she could bequeath.

A crocheted wool tidy, with an acorn or an eagle square in its middle, adorned every chair back in the room.

Wing Winfield glanced from the clock to the tidies and onto the whatnot with its vase of paper daisies, at Mrs. Wainwright and Rebecca, rocking comfortably over their knitting; at Jonathan who some day would be a professor like his father; at Louanna whose cheeks were flaming red after Professor Burke's dissertation on eggs; then at the professor, then at Rand—oh, why had he

come, when Rand was coming too? It was always the same, but the feeling defied his sense, confused his senses. If Rand looked at Louanna; if Louanna smiled at Rand. . . .

"Here, Wing," Professor Burke said; "try this yourself. Just take the straw in your hand. . . ."

"No, thanks," Wing said stiffly. "Not tonight, Professor."

"I'll try," Louanna said. "Here, Mr. Rand, you steady my fingers."

"*I* will," Wing said, leaping to his feet. "Allow me, Louanna!"

But Louanna's small white fingers were already lost in Rand's great brown ones. "You do it like this," Professor Burke said. "Bend the straw; insert it in the decanter. Now lift. See?"

Crash. "Oh dear," Louanna said.

"Well, nothing broke," Rand said. "No damage is done."

"My hand shook," Louanna said.

"I tried not to let it," Rand said.

There was that look again, deep into each other's eyes. "I have to go," Wing said. "I haven't studied my moral and intellectual philosophy."

"For shame!" Louanna said. "Really, I should report you to Father."

"You can't go, Wing," Rebecca said. "Sit down."

"Yes, sit down, Wing," Mrs. Wainwright said.

So Wing sat down, sulking as he did so, and trying to arrange his grey striped trousers so that his kneecaps would not stick out like two small round saucepans, sharp and gaunt on the long upright handles of his shins.

Professor Burke went on with his tricks, and Wing resented and admired him. He was a bachelor of forty or so, and gossip already linked his name with Rebecca's. As if Rebecca Wainwright would ever marry, Wing thought, any more than the Town Hall would fall down, or Deacon Swarthe be seen going into the tavern, or the country ever agree about slavery, or Louanna have eyes for anyone but Rand.

But the village did not approve of Professor Burke. Goodness only knew where he had been and what he had seen, besides Fanny Elssler on the Park Theatre stage waving her legs as vigorously as any decent female would a feather duster. This much he admitted, and sleeping with his windows wide open to the night air and performing breathing exercises before them, first thing in the morning, his arms thrust in front of him, then above his head, then to the sides, one-two-three, one-two-three. Even his conjuring tricks were not exactly proper, defying as they did the natural and therefore the moral law.

3

BY THE fire Mrs. Wainwright nodded and dozed, for it was nearly nine o'clock and all her strength and best intentions could not hold her eyelids open, as hard as she tried to put her mind onto spectacular matters like Queen Victoria's latest baby and whether it was decent at such a time for even a queen to let her senses be put off by the vapor of ether, when there it was right in Genesis, in plain sight, the third chapter and the sixteenth verse. . . . And a queen could set *such* an example. Look at the way her dresses and hats had been copied from one end of the earth to the other.

Mrs. Wainwright was sleepily glad that she need never be a queen, with so much responsibility upon her shoulders. Her husband and sons and daughters were quite enough, she decided, feeling that perhaps, just at times, Professor Wainwright was a trifle too much for her. But it was unwifely to think that. It was only that she tired of seeing his nose in a book year after year; he was a good man, and just. Of course he was set in his ways, but so were most professors: they had their own ideas they would not change or have changed for them. And they were testy at times, when there was a question being

mulled over in their minds. And then at examinations, when the students failed it was natural for a teacher to blame himself; perhaps he could have explained certain subjects a little more thoroughly or spent more hours in prayer over his problems. Yes, the other professors had their ways, their wives had said so at the quilting. Professor Denham would stay in his room all day with the door locked and not the sound of a leaf turned or a pen scratching: his wife said she thought he *slept* in there! Even the president took odd spells, talking in his sleep, or sitting on a stump in the woods letting the cattle come and lick all over his clothing, as hard as cow-slobber was to get off. And here was Professor Burke with his tumbler and feather. . . .

But Professor Burke had been to Niagara Falls. He had sent and received a telegram. He said that to be healthy a person should bathe all over, not every week but every day!

In fact he had known a man now living in Nebraska Territory who had attained the age of ninety-six years by the expedient of morning and evening dousing his head in cold water, very cold water, and soaking his hair in it thoroughly.

Mrs. Wainwright wondered if Professor Burke soaked his head morning and evening. His ears would gather from such a performance, and when they did, who would bake onions to poultice them? Who would bother to

warm sweet oil and put it in them, drop by drop? He needed a wife, but of course not Rebecca. Rebecca could never sleep with a window open. With her weak chest she would be gone in no time, like poor Amarila Winfield whom consumption had claimed in no time at all, laying its fingers upon her while she lay ill with grief and little Wing. That was *quick* consumption, more ravaging, more ruthless than the lingering kind her Aunt Abigail had, coughing on from year to year like Joe Pratt and Sim Wells and the Widow Wilson, and dozens of others that could be named, sick this minute, down the hill in the village.

Not that consumption was half as bad as the epidemics of '43 and '49. Cholera!—the very disease they had come here to avoid. One dreadful spring the college had closed because of it; only six young gentlemen left in one class—not enough to waste a professor's breath on. And in spite of all the sulphur and asafetida and gum camphor she had sewed into bags and fastened around the children's necks, Rebecca had taken it, but she had been spared and none of the rest had come down with it. A good dose of thoroughwort was the thing, just at the beginning: it would cure it if taken in time. After that, the best remedy was an ounce each of gum camphor, laudanum and red pepper; a quarter ounce each, cedar, hemlock and spearmint; twelve ounces of alcohol. But the dead wagon had rolled through street after street, the driver's voice as heavy as

the hearts behind darkened windows: "Any dead today? Any dead?" But at last hope came back, over the muddy snow, and the lilacs were purple in the dooryards: the fearful March was gone and the elm boughs wept again their pale green April tears.

All that had come and vanished; all that was over and done with. Now there was nothing but the small uncertainty that hovered over Professor Burke: was he nice or was he not, with such modern ideas and all his strange tricks and notions and the village talk about him? Perhaps he should not be approved of quite so openly, that is, invited into one's home—still, the president had hired him; that ought to be enough. Mrs. Wainwright sighed. And her own husband had brought him under their roof, she reminded herself. That surely should be sufficient, if anything was.

Louanna was laughing, planning for tomorrow, an expedition through the woods to the quarry; all of them should go: Rebecca and Professor Burke, Rand and herself and Wing Winfield. Wing said no and had to be coaxed. Rebecca said, "Horrors!—to the quarry in winter?" And the others said together, "There's no snow, and the air is warm while there's sun. We'll start at three, soon as classes are over."

It was only a mile. They would be back in daylight. This late in February the days were actually quite long.

4

THE VILLAGE had been founded with prayer, so long ago that only the old people could remember that crude log shelter under the towering trees of primeval woods and the clouds of wild pigeons so dark overhead that the sky was hidden. The words of the hymn thundered back at the worshippers and the words of the prayer were lost in the forest. Nobody remembered that now because half a century had gone by. It was too late to remember: life was moving forward, not backward. Only a year after the village was founded the state legislature took action on ridding the region of panthers and wolves. Now there was a college of three buildings on one of the hills. Nobody had seen a panther in a long time.

In the center of the village was a square with the Town Hall on one corner and a church on each of the others. The principal street extended east and west from it. The block to the east was the business section where the shops and tavern stood, usually with horses in front of them, tied to the hitching rails. The hitching rails extended around the corners where the churches were, and in front of the Town Hall was the watering trough, from which dogs drank too, standing on their hind legs to lap the

dark green water. The stage driver always stopped there to let his horses drink, and sometimes prankish students leaped onto the stage and the driver had difficulty getting them off. Over it all, in summer, buzzards swirled in the wide bright sky.

The village had been settled in November, and it was November when Josiah Winfield first saw it, a dreary month with cold rain falling. But in a later May, when Wing Winfield was born, the apple trees were in blossom, pink and white from Amarila's window. She knew she would not see them again. Not all the warm milk from all the red cows in the valley could cure her cough, whatever Aunt Abigail said. If the milk of red cows could heal the lungs, Aunt Abigail would have stopped coughing long ago, for had not Uncle William purchased a red bossy for that very purpose? It was no use; she was doomed. The doctor bled her in vain; she only lay as listless as before.

In 1857 the walnut house in which she died was still the village show place, though there were a few houses of brick, mellow as rose petals. The original cabins were gone to make way for more pretentious dwellings, or had frame ells built on them, or second stories of wide boards, half hidden with creeper and clematis. Wing Winfield slept in the room in which he was born, sometimes fearing the shadows that crossed the floor in the early autumn moonlight. Usually a village woman slept in the ell cham-

ber that held his grandmother's great loom. In the months nobody slept there the spiders stretched their weaving from yarn beams to cross beams, fashioning a stranger warp and woof than Hannah Wing had ever dreamed.

There were days when Wing was sick of it all and would have gone to live in the college building with Rand, but too bitterly he knew there was no escape. To leave the village was the solution, but he would never go. Nobody travelled east; everybody went west: St. Joseph, Fort Laramie, Sacramento, San Francisco. When Wing was a little boy those names were on every tongue. People had gone west for gold; they had not come back. Wing did not need money now, although money was scarce. He resented the circumstances which had caused his father's death. Hard times. He was tired of hearing about hard times. Nobody had white sugar; what there was came in huge lumps which had to be broken into small lumps before it would go in the sugar bowl; then it must be lifted out again with tongs. In spring all the maples were tapped; there was maple sugar in abundance: it tasted good enough, except in tea. Wing wondered, as the village continued to wonder, what fate Wendell Field had met, and imagined him, too, in the West, perhaps dead on the great plains, his scalp dangling from a savage's scant waiststring. He had disappeared into the woods that night, when the neighbors came running. No one gave chase soon enough; everyone was concerned with staunch-

ing the flow of blood from Josiah's breast. The house was so new there were no cobwebs: nothing could stop bleeding like cobwebs. But it was too late, anyway. Wendell's aim was true, and his pistol had been close over Josiah's heart. So close that until the very last minute Amarila had not seen it.

Wing wished that he had known his mother. He imagined Louanna was like her, because of a stray remark of Mrs. Wainwright's: "Your mother was like that, Wing." Louanna wore great hoops and Wing pictured his mother in hoops, knowing that she wore crinolines. He tried to visualize his father, but such sight was denied him. He knew Josiah Winfield was handsome and dignified, but he could not make him young, not in any dream, in spite of the words on the gravestone. Thirty-two was old because Wing was eighteen, and it still would be old when Wing was twenty. Fathers were always old, and because his father had been old his mother must not be young in the dream, either. She could not be a girl, glad and roguish like Louanna. She must be swathed in voluminous black silk and sit by the fire. Hidden in the upstairs of the walnut house the green satin bonnet bore the tarnish of four times twenty seasons. Once, playing in childhood, Wing had snatched the flowers off. Miss Sarah had screamed at him, tearing them out of his hands. They lay yet in the box with the bonnet, but they were pink no longer. Their bloom was lost as loveliness is forever vanished from

flowers that have lived their moment. Wing would not look at them. There was grief in the sight of them, but it was Miss Sarah's grief, not his own. The boy did not know the difference. He knew only his unhappy bewilderment, and that Miss Sarah's narrow lips on his cheek always made him a little sick. But he cried when the grappling hooks dragged her from the mill pond.

After Miss Sarah there was Aunt Abigail's oldest niece, but she was no good at all, washing his face until it was chapped the whole winter. Then there was Angie who had only one eye, and then the Widow Clark who married the new Presbyterian minister as promptly as possible. Sadie came next; she was plump and cheerful, but the neighbors invented a mystery about her and one day she was gone for certain. Sophronia Bradley was all right until the night there was a little mewing cry in the big ell chamber: Sophronia had had a baby, so *she* had to go. Then there was Mrs. Bassett, a large comfortable person with red hair; then Elsa from New York City, one of a load of foreign orphan children brought to the county in search of homes. But Wing was fifteen by that time and the village considered him too old to be left alone in the house with a young girl. Mrs. Mott came to watch him and Elsa, and Elsa took dysentery. . . .

The walnut house was a nuisance, Wing thought, always having to be attended to, and the blankets washed and the feather beds sunned. He could get his own meals

and sweep up some of the dirt. But the minute he was by himself the church ladies began to worry. They were ready to suggest the very person to keep house for him. And the first thing he knew, there she was, asking him whether he liked his eggs hard or soft, and would he send off for a big box of tea, and should she not dry some of the gooseberries that were going to waste in the garden.

5

AT THREE they were ready to start: Professor Burke's pockets bulging with apples; Rebecca in merino with lace about the neck and a brooch at the throat; Rand and Wing and Louanna all crying aloud in their hearts: "Oh, why should we let anything come between us? We love one another!" But there was nothing they could do about it. If a man and a woman love each other there is no room for a third in either heart.

So they walked slowly along the brow of the hill, and the oak leaves were damp and soft on the ground under their feet. Acorns were there too; last autumn's acorns that crunched quietly, and the acorns of uncounted autumns that were more or less a part of the earth itself. To the south, in the valley, the village lay hidden under

the haze of late afternoon; woodsmoke and the mist of waning winter. Another month, two months, and these woods would be alive with springtime. Here the arbutus would creep, flowering forth in timid beauty. Here the first bloodroot would lift its wild white blossoms and the hepatica its hairy tendrils. Robins would return to the white lilac tree on the president's lawn, where they had nested every April of Louanna's life. All her childhood she had looked on her way home from lessons in the preparatory department of the Female College. This spring, as then, the eggs would be that same clear incredible blue: how the heart skipped at sight of it. Nothing had ever been as beautiful as robins' eggs in the downy hollow of an April nest. Nothing in the world.

They paused on the crest of the hill and were silent before the panorama outspread to the horizon. To the west, wooded hills stretched like brown scallops with valleys between. The pale sun gilded the few lonely shafts in the cemetery—the college dead. "Theirs is an erudition we have yet to possess," Rand said, and Rebecca answered, "Oh, Mr. Rand; how doleful!"

"Surely I do not mean to be doleful," he said. "Death comes to us all."

"Ah, but it is wrong to look at it that way," Louanna said. "Life comes first. I propose to make the most of it."

Wing Winfield did not say anything. He stared over the village and into the south. It was a pity the National

Road had not come to the village. It would never be a city now; the canal had missed it too, and the new railroad passed four miles to the south. There was only the college left out of all the dream, and most of the dreamers were dead, as dreams themselves must be at the last.

To the north, it was miles to the next village. The forest lay between, broken only by a few farms. Seven miles to the east the county seat was a thriving town, touched by both canal and railroad. The last few years a coach had regularly covered the distance between there and the village, and in June and September and at holiday time students swarmed the top and sides of it, their carpetbags waving. In June, Rand must go away, Wing thought. In June he will receive his diploma; then he will never come back. In June he will take Louanna with him. . . . How long all the summers were, and how empty. Nobody on the streets but the shopkeepers, and housewives going about their little visitings and errands to the sick and dying. Men standing on the corners; maybe buying a bit of fresh meat, or some sugar or spice for their wives' baking. Always talk about Chase, who was governor now the Republicans had gotten hold of things, (and they were likely to keep it for a good long time!). And Buchanan was in the White House—a calm faced man with nightmares of slaves and Kansas. . . . Down the hill to the north the stone house was supposed to be a station in the great underground railway system that reached from the

river to Canada. Above the house, on the open face of the ridge, the quarry had been cut into the solid stone. Above it was a winding path which led along the ragged rim of rock. Times were so hard nobody needed stone, or could pay the money for the cutting. Small clumps of tamarack grew along the rim, and straggling jungles of pawpaw. The view was best from the very edge of the abyss; down below, the rock was left in a mass of angled grey, ominous and lonely.

They approached from beneath, and Rand assisted Louanna over the rough broken floor of the quarry bowl. Professor Burke gazed about with intelligent interest. Once upon a time the glacier had covered all this land, making the hills and the valleys. Next week, in his classroom, Professor Burke would discuss the glacier at length. He would mention erosion and the weight of years. He would speak in terms of centuries and of ages, spreading ice on the imagination with a lavish hand, then removing it by a turn of the earth and a ray of the sun. He would translate Genesis with rhetoric and freedom, until his classes emerged rubbing their eyes, wondering what there really had been in the beginning. Then he would be called into the president's office for a little talk. One could say too much; one could question too much. And one could do infinitely too much thinking.

But now it was enough to explain phrenology a trifle, using Wing's bared head as model and example. Here

was the region of wonder, here of hope; back here of love of approbation.

"How perfectly enchanting," Louanna said. "And do I have a bump of wonder too, Professor? What is this hollow place above my temple? For concentration? Fie! I cannot think of anything for longer than a minute." But Wing knew she could. She was only saying that for Rand to hear. Rand was so wise she would make herself dull beside him.

They sat on stairs of stone and the girls knew they should take cold from removing their bonnets in the winter chill, let alone what the cold stones could do to them. They drew their capes closer about them and sat carefully and uncomfortably in their weekday hoops, feeling the dampness creep through the wool of their stockings and of their flannel drawers and through the warmth of the extra knit petticoat they had put on for this unusual outing. Professor Burke drew the apples from his pocket and rubbed them shiny on the tail of his coat. They were so tart and chill they set the teeth on edge when bitten into, and once Louanna nearly choked on hers from laughing.

Rebecca's nose turned red and her fingers tingled. She ate her apple with her mittens on, hoping Professor Burke would not consider her silly. He was being dreadfully silly himself, if he only knew it, capering about on the rocks

like a four-year-old; pretending to be a cave man slaying an enemy who threatened the sanctity of his home.

Wing and Rand thought him undignified, but they did not care. They were too busy watching Louanna and each other. It was fascinating to follow the line of her straight little teeth against the curved crimson of the apple. Her white hands moved this way and that; her blue eyes were lifted, then hidden again, her lashes dark on her cheeks.

"How gracious nature is," she said, gesturing daintily in the direction of the eastern valley. "In a month there will be pussy willows. Shall we make an excursion after them then?"

"Yes," Rand said, his voice like a caress. "Yes, Louanna."

"It will be wet down there," Wing said dubiously. "A month from now we can't go near the mill race without ruining our boots."

"Well, you need not go," Louanna said, "if you are afraid for your boots."

"But I'm not," Wing said.

"They *are* handsome," Rand said.

"It isn't the boots," Wing said. "It isn't—anything."

Rebecca turned from Professor Burke. "Mother would not want us to go," she said. "I'm quite sure she wouldn't. She scarcely approved of our coming today—and it *is* damp."

"Nonsense," Professor Burke said. "If air is fresh it must be maligned. It is always too damp or too dry, too warm or too cold. So the whole world stays in and never gets any of it."

"Oh, but we do!" Louanna said. "There is our walk to church every Sunday, to say nothing of odd moments out of doors."

"Odd moments, indeed," Professor Burke said. "That is not sufficient. A healthy female your age should *exercise* in the open air. She should promenade at a rapid pace, or even romp with a child or dog or play catch-the-ball until she is in a mild perspiration."

A lady in perspiration? Rebecca gasped and blushed. "Shall we proceed with our plans?" Louanna said hastily.

They had arranged that the young ladies should ascend to the top of the quarry by way of the path which led along its sloping margin. Professor Burke was to escort them, though he said he would rather climb up the face with Rand and Wing: there were narrow steps of stone to set the feet upon and to cling to. It was perfectly safe: young gentlemen tried their strength there day after day, but how dangerous it appeared with the rock shining from the winter's damp.

"Wing, Wing, look out!"

"Be careful, Mr. Rand!"

They were so far up now, in the grey of early twilight, that their faces were indistinguishable above the dark

shadows of their beards. Higher and higher they went, their chilly fingers gripping the colder rock. But they were happy together; they were the friends of the barren room with ivy tendrils on the window sill; they were the friends who clasped hands after the Homeric-Euclidian debate, the bright water of conquest on Rand's brow. "That was magnificent," Wing would be saying. "Calhoun couldn't have done better; Webster couldn't. The college is proud of you."

The cold moist wind of evening touched their foreheads and billowed their coat-tails out away from their bodies and the precipice. Louanna was as far away as if in some other world she cried out: "Watch now, Wing! Please take care, Mr. Rand!" This was a world for men, and men must prove their vigor and their mettle. Up and up, rock after rock, ledge after ledge. . . . Oh, it was great to be alive in a February twilight, one's arteries throbbing, one's chest a blaze of lusty pain from the rough raw air. A little later they would build a fire in Rand's room and the light would frolic on the lofty ceiling and they would talk and talk, with mist hovering pale against the window where the ivy was. Rand would recite a poem or two—the only poems Wing had ever liked—and the firelight would redden the bindings of the books on shelves and table, and dapple the one chair, and cover the bed with a counterpane so brilliantly fantastic that Wing must leap up and touch it. . . .

"It is getting dark fast," Professor Burke said. "Winfield! Rand!—where are you?"

"We must make haste," Wing said, his breathing short and desperate, his fingers colder and colder. "Come on, Rand."

He could not look back for his friend; there was only enough light left to see the rim of the rock above him. It was too late to have begun the climb—what fools they were! But there was the sky above the overhanging ledge, and the earth was somewhere between, damp and sweet. In a minute his fingers would be upon it, sinking into the soft moist mat of grass. Up there were the tamaracks, pungent with winter, and beyond them the pawpaw thicket with its dank carpet of forgotten leaves.

He lifted an arm, then a leg, cautiously into the dark, and the very grass blades he clutched seemed to quiver with him at the sheer fact of safety. Then he reached out a hand—"Here I am, Rand, catch hold." But even as he said it, his voice broke with terror. He felt a great wrench of the earth as it bore for an instant the weight of Rand's heavy body. He dared not look down, so he looked toward the sky. A dim wraith of cloud wafted over the evening star. Wing staggered to his feet and started sobbing.

BOOK THREE

NO, LOTTIE WINFIELD could not spell *piety*. She was seven years old and could not spell it. Her sister Alice, who was nearly nine, lay gazing out into the maple tree with its first strange feathery blossoms, and made up her mind to teach Lottie that much this very day, so that the schoolmistress need not shriek out so, thin and high, and frown at Lottie until she wept and hid her face in her apron.

But right this minute Lottie was safe from the schoolmistress and from the great shaggy dogs which bounded out to the picket fences and sniffed at the sisters on their way home from school. In the west bedroom of her father's walnut house Lottie Winfield was safe from everything, and it did not even matter so very much that she could not spell *piety*, though Mamma insisted it was really an easy word after all, and look how much harder ones Alice could spell without the least difficulty: *dimension* and *specific* and *incomprehensibility*, to say nothing of *pellucid* and *meteorite* and *acquittal*. Alice loved to stand against the parlor wall while Mamma pronounced

from the McGuffey Speller: once she had stood two hours and a half, and Mamma said that was good enough to merit a chance at the big spellings in the Town Hall, but Papa said no, there was no sense to it; she would do better to learn to sew, and help her mother with the baby.

Amy was the baby, a year old, and a year younger than Brother who had died, and who would have been named Wing for Papa if he had lived, but Papa said there was no use of giving a name to a baby who never even once drew the breath of life; so they had intended to call Amy *Wing*, but she was a girl and they named her for Papa's mother, Amarila Wing Winfield. Then that proved too cumbersome, and soon she was Amy, for short. Now she could take three steps across the parlor floor to where Alice was waiting to catch her, and she could stand by herself, holding onto the haircloth sofa, but Mamma said haircloth was going out of fashion; there were other fabrics so much more in the mode, and would Papa have the sofa re-covered and could they buy the material the next time they travelled to Columbus?

Lottie and Alice shared the four-poster in the west bedroom, and behind it was a company room, and across the hall, as big as the west room and another room put together, the master's bedroom where Mamma and Papa slept in the largest and grandest bed in the village. Beside their bed was a narrow cot with sides, for Amy, and behind all the bedrooms was the ell chamber with the

loom in it, a great fearful place where Alice and Lottie had their switchings, smarting and tingling because Papa always made them draw their skirts up.

But Papa was kind and good; he was only stern, and very likely they *had* been naughty. Papa never smiled, or if he almost did, it was merely a movement of his mustaches and a rising and falling of the long beard which hung above his chest, as glossy and beautiful as a silky dark flower. Papa had lost his friend, everybody said; he had never gotten over the shock of his friend's awful death long ago in their boyhood: Papa had climbed up and up, over the slippery rocks, and Papa's friend had climbed up and up behind him, until just at the top Papa had pulled himself onto the ground safe and sound and his friend had reached for the grass and the earth was so soft it had given way. . . . Down, down, down, he went, to the bottom of the quarry. . . . Mamma told how the men had carried him to Grandpapa's house on top of the hill and the doctor had hurried but it was no use. . . . And now the friend lay in the college graveyard where Grandfather Winfield was and where Brother was, with a pink geranium at his feet in summer, and where little Aunt Deborah slept—a baby aunt who had died before Mamma was born. Mamma cried too, when she told about Papa's friend, so that it seemed as if she must have cared for him almost as much as Papa did, but of course he had been Papa's friend; ladies did not have gentlemen for

friends—they had other ladies. That was why Papa could not talk about his friend to Mamma, and why he looked so alone, but he had always been alone: he said so sometimes, in a voice as sad as crying. Mamma explained that that was because Grandmother and Grandfather Winfield had died before Papa could even remember, and Alice and Lottie were sad too, to think of that, and to see Grandmother Winfield's bonnet which was in the ell chamber still—except that they never liked to go in there anyhow, on account of the switchings.

The closest Mamma came to having a gentleman friend was Professor Cavendish who taught rhetoric and English literature, but the few times he had come to tea Papa was inordinately cross, speaking to everyone far too politely, and finally bursting out in a rage, after Professor Cavendish had gone. There was something about some verses Mamma had written in her faint fine handwriting in a small ledger with pale purple lines, and it seemed that Papa did not care for poetry and he did not want Mamma to like it either. But Professor Cavendish was wild about poetry: Alice had heard him tell Mamma so in precisely those words. In the parlor he had repeated some of it, one poem beginning: "E'en though these mortal raptures fade . . ." and going on and on through dozens of verses so sweet they made your heart beat faster.

Lying in the four-poster, watching the bluebirds in the maple tree, Alice felt that she should be happy to some

day write a poem of her own, but there were so many poems already, all the ones in the readers and the ones in the spelling books, and Grandfather Winfield's leather-bound volumes in the glass case in the parlor, besides the poetry books in the new college library—part of Grandfather Winfield's dream, Papa called the library, and Papa himself had turned the first earth for it with a clean gleaming spade: it was a tall building with towers, and in June the graduating class would plant ivy at one corner and set a carved stone there to mark it, *Class of 1873*.. There was ivy planted at the corners of all the buildings, and some of the vines were heavy and strong, but of course when you actually thought about it they must be every bit as old as Papa. And seeing the brightest bluebird suddenly fly away, Alice stifled the vision of how it would seem to ages and ages from now have grown as old as Papa. She squeezed her hands together in infinite dismay, against the time when her face would put on a somber expression as Papa's did when he was about to begin, "Once, when I was a child. . . ." It did not appear that Papa could ever have been a child like Lottie and herself, or least of all a laughing joyful baby like Amy: Papa must have been grown-up forever, with coat-tails and plaid trousers, and a great linked gold watch chain strung across his waistcoat. Amy might thrust out a fat hand and seize the watch chain, in the dining room after supper when for a little while Papa would take her on his knee, but Alice

could not remember when she had ever been allowed such a liberty, or even when Lottie had; Papa was so unapproachable and so dignified and so perpetually aloof within his own dark silence. "That is just Papa's way," Mamma said with the finality of having explained everything, for the moment and for the hereafter. "Papa was never a very cheerful person," she would add occasionally, and Alice and Lottie had to be grateful for that, since it was extra and must have a meaning, but whatever its significance was, it was lost to them: Papa was a thin irritable man who switched little girls for sliding down the stair-rail, not because it was bold and unladylike and showed their drawers, which was his excuse for the switchings, but indefinably because the stair-rail was once and for all a polished walnut emblem of Grandfather Winfield, who had scattered the figures of his influence from one end of the village to the other. There was the stone bank, into which Papa vanished each week day promptly at half past eight, and which had staunchly survived panic and stress and Grandfather Winfield's death: Papa was very proud of the bank, if its affairs had lately cost him many a night's sleep. And there was Winfield Hall overlooking the village, its name in solid stone letters for everyone to see. Grandpapa Wainwright's study was in its bottom story, with his classroom directly across the hall: a desk, chairs, a blackboard, young gentlemen with sidewhiskers, a jug with a withered rose thrust into

it, the smell of books and of chalkdust. Grandpapa Wainwright was a gentle old man—*Dean,* they called him, and when the president was away it was Grandpapa's duty to pray and read the Scripture lesson in morning chapel: one day his prayer was so long that a dreadful student had broken out snoring right in the solemnest part of it. But everybody loved Grandpapa.

A bright slanting sunbeam shook its yellow finger across the doorsill, straight at Alice. "Mercy me!" she cried. "Lottie! Lottie!—time to get up!" And back went the counterpane and comforter and double blanket, down to the foot of the four-poster, leaving Lottie with only her nightdress, and Alice began tugging at that: "Get up, lazy! It's churning day! Maybe Mamma will let us mold the butter."

2

By seven they were gathered about the breakfast table: Wing Winfield (whose letters were invariably addressed Wing Winfield, Esquire), his wife Louanna in a grey calico morning wrapper, Alice and Lottie in their school-day worsteds, and little Amy, rapping with a spoon on an old pewter cup that had been about the house nobody

knew how long—something of Mr. Winfield's mother's very likely, Louanna would say, and the village nodded and sighed as by ones and twos and threes it sat in the parlor calling upon the banker's wife. Yes, Mr. Winfield's mother, a shadowy young person forgotten by all but the rheumatic old women and crotchety old men whom the rest of the village called "the original residents." But they were seldom that: only one or two were left of the first who had come to settle in the wilderness, and of those there was none who actually remembered: a querulous grandmother who had been a babe in her mother's arms—what did she know of a hymn and a prayer lost in the pitch-dark cavern of unbroken forest? Aged men, stooped over canes, who rose painfully and groped in cupboards and bureau drawers to return at last with a bullet mold which had belonged to their youth; a bit of buckskin, an unfamiliar flower long pressed between the stained, thin pages of Saint Matthew or Saint Mark. . . . The Mexican War, the West, dreams, silver and gold, some tarnished, some dim, dead, forgotten. . . . Too much was nearer, and part of that was like a dream, remote, desperate, alien to words and consciousness: another war, kinsmen against kinsmen, blood spilled to mingle with its own. Manassas, Fredericksburg, Crump's Landing, Fairfax Court House: names spelled with lead and tears. Chickamauga, Atlanta; pain and flames; a long fierce struggle toward the sea. . . .

And as a fragment of the dream Louanna considered

her marriage with Wing Winfield. It had come upon her unintended, unasked, with the same certainty of bloodshed between North and South, and she had known that such a marriage was inevitable, as a nation had realized that war was inevitable. Because of the war she had married Wing Winfield, and because she was sorry for him and had no defense against him, or that defense had been undermined by time and Wing's stubborn perseverance; and because he was forever in her father's house, his face ominous and grave, his voice relentlessly insistent.

First there were the endless dreadful months after Rand's fall in the quarry, with Wing blaming himself, yet aware that he was not to blame, and all the time begging reassurance, like a child who knows himself safe in the dark, yet is afraid in spite of reason and conviction. It was almost a relief when war loomed closer and closer; when tall headlines and awed tongues announced the dissolution of the Union; when secession was a fact instead of a word, and the *Star of the West* was actually fired upon in Charleston harbor; when delirium was in the air and on every heart, north or south, and finally Wing was ready to go, in the freshest of blue, and gleaming boots, and a ridiculous flat cap with a square-edged visor. When Louanna waved goodbye from the railway platform at the county seat the new ring showed quite plainly on her finger: her hand was so tiny and white that something tremendous seemed to burst upon Wing with the force of

a sudden internal explosion. He wished in vain that he were staying at home, were decrepit or a coward or among the heroic few already maimed and triumphantly returned—anything but a soldier on his way southward, with years or death between this moment and seeing Louanna again.

But nothing came out of it except for Louanna the strain and torment of anxiety. Wing contrived to fare well enough, with intervals of fear and excitement and exhaustion. In the autumn of '63 he spent a week in the village, finding affairs at the bank in reasonable shape, and Professor Wainwright's beard a trifle whiter, and only a handful of students at classes in the college; too few for any use, but life had to go on somehow, business had to go on; war could not be a people's whole concern, strange as it seemed to see children at play, men tilling fields, women engaged in the simple normal processes of laying the table, sweeping floors, setting a room to rights.

Alice Winfield was born the first week in June, 1864, and wailed through the summer with colic and small secret miseries. In this room her grandmother, Amarila, had wept with sorrow and despair. That did not matter now; perhaps nothing mattered. Under the windows the tiger lilies unfurled their speckled splendor, and along the fence honeysuckle wakened to its own lush fragrance. Walking the floor, back and forth, back and forth, patting the fat cross Alice, Louanna would sing:

"We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more,
From Mississippi's winding stream, and from New England's shore. . . ."

But it seemed as if a baby never stopped crying; there remained only the consolation of rendering it whatever meager comfort one's strength and ingenuity could devise. There were times when Louanna wished that she might lay this particular infant in the middle of the great bed and even perhaps go so far as to stifle her shrieks with a pillow! and be quiet and peaceful once more in an ordered universe which allowed long hours for reading and the writing of literary compositions, both prose and poetry. Then there was one's fancy-work: garments for the baby (which the ungrateful creature might well be expected to spit or wet upon), and some of the interesting articles of dress or domesticity featured in recent issues of *Godey's:* a netted cover for horses' ears, for instance, with eight tassels; a most useful and necessary contrivance too, when one thought about it, for gnats and sweat-bees made Dolly terribly nervous in hot weather, not to mention the eternal horseflies. Here was in fact a double demand of Christian duty: kindness to animals as well as consideration for human safety, with runaways occurring day after day; and the netted covers were not at all tedious to fashion, except the ears, which were a bit confusing at first, what

with decreasing a stitch at the end of each round, to make them taper, and then never being entirely sure of a fit. Horses' ears were like humans'—no two pairs exactly alike, and there was no doubt of it—it *was* a job to attempt to try anything on a horse!

But in spite of the war and the baby and Louanna's rebellion, life went miraculously on: Alice sneezed, sat up, cut one tooth and then another, Louanna found leisure to read *Elsie Venner* (by skipping some of the duller portions), and time to play the piano and sing *When This Cruel War Is Over.* Then one twilight there was a step at the gate and Wing was home unexpectedly, but to stay, and going to the bank in the mornings as if nothing had happened. Other men came home, some in stiff pine boxes, and there were ceremonies in the churches and in the graveyard; one or two in the college cemetery. Hoops grew and grew; curls languished on shoulders; wreaths and roses flourished amid the incredible waves from which those curls descended. Hats wore streamers and feathers; even a frill of lace. Lottie came sputtering into the world one snowy dawn in 1866, in the same wide bed where her sister had been born, and where Amarila had given birth to Wing nearly twenty-nine years earlier. Here was another baby Louanna had not wanted: she wondered why life was so, biting her lips to keep from screaming in protest. Frightened and solemn, Wing stood by the bed:

"Have courage, my dear." Yes, courage, an indefinable quality which must spring from a woman's soul, presumably at will, however racked her body.

Brother, who had died, and at last Amy; and sitting in her high-necked neat calico, pouring Wing Winfield's coffee, Louanna's lips set themselves in a thin firm line: there would be no more; she was determined as to that; a woman's mind must be good for something, or why had she been given one? Why had the Lord not made her with a body alone, an instrument for the bearing and nurturing of offspring? Why was it so and why must it be? And no one understood, least of all the other women, who agreed that a baby was the gift of God, and quoted from *The Ladies' Wreath:*

"Belinda! The young blossom that doth lie
So lightly on thy bosom,—clasp it there;
For on her brow an empress doth not wear,
Nor in her jewelled zone, a gem more fair,
Or that doth deck her more becomingly.
Forget not then, that deep within thy flower
The germs lie hid for lovelier, holier things!—
Filial affection, that spontaneous springs,
High *truth* and maiden *purity;*—the *power*
That comes of *gentleness;*—ay, and more,—
Piety, nourished in the bosom's core;

These, if so cherished, shall thy blossom bear,
And with the dews of heavenly love impearled,
It shall adorn thee in another world."

But that was old-fashioned and horrid: one questioned whether the author had ever cherished such a blossom on her own bosom, or if she realized that not always would it repose there lightly or fragrantly or even becomingly; quite the contrary when a baby was teething or ill or rumpled or bad-tempered. And oh, the mind, the restless seeking mind, and all the truth and beauty to be found in poetry, the reading or the writing of it! And Wing was precisely like every other gentleman in the world: a son; he must have a son; a good wife would bear a son for him. She had done her best and that was not enough; there was perpetually something better that a woman must do; something not of her own volition, but of her husband's. A man had his business and the right to be seen going about it, but a woman's business was never decently literature, in spite of Sara Josepha Hale (whose husband had long ago passed away, which rendered it respectable and proper!). To be caught reading or writing was at once an indolence and a disgrace, unless it were Sunday afternoon and the writing was a letter, or at the worst one's diary, and the reading no more than the Sunday school paper, or as a bare possibility, *Harper's Weekly,* in the event that one's husband happened to be

a subscriber, and in the further event that he had finished with the current copy and had laid it aside. Even then no lady must ever examine the cartoons, all full of finance and politics and matters of which she was far safer and twice as genteel in ignorance: men with shocks of hair and wrinkled vests; strange unexplainable words like *Tammany* and *corruption*. . . .

"Mamma," Alice said, "may we mold the butter today, when school is over?"

"May I use the strawberry mold?" Lottie said. "And Alice the sheaf of wheat?"

"Ma!" Amy said. "Ma, ma!"

"Be quiet, Baby," Wing Winfield said. "Don't make your mother nervous."

"She can't understand," Louanna said. "What does she know about being nervous?"

"May we, Mamma?" Alice said.

"Please, Mamma," Lottie said.

"I suppose so," Louanna said. "If Mary is through churning."

There were corn cakes for breakfast, and fried ham and fried potatoes, fried eggs and dried apples and doughnuts. The little girls drank their coffee weakened with milk, and at supper their tea quite thin with hot water. They were tall slim children with big eyes: "Like Mr. Winfield," Louanna told the endless procession of callers. "Very much like him," the village said. "Wing was a

spindling boy. He hasn't got over it much as a man now."

In the parlor Louanna kept her ledger locked in Amarila's writing desk. There was little else in it, for Amarila had scarcely used it: the Gift book Josiah had given her on their wedding day; a later Gift, *THE GARLAND, or Token of Friendship,* presented to Louanna by Wing, Christmas and New Year's, 1853; and several favorite books Louanna had brought with her from the house on the hill: *The Female Poets of America, The Lady's Companion, The Looking-Glass for the Mind,* and a half-dozen others. These were Mamma's books and the little girls dared not touch them if by chance the desk should be open or one of the volumes left face down on top of Mamma's embroidery basket. They were as precious to Mamma as the thick sheaves of papers covered with figures were to Papa, and it was usually in the evenings when Papa sat close to the lamp, with those papers outspread on the dining room table, his pencil poised above them, that Mamma sat alone in the parlor, her ledger on her knee, her embroidery fallen down onto Grandmother Winfield's elegant carpet upon which crumbs must never be scattered except by the minister or cigar ashes ever be spilled except by Papa. Mamma's pencil would be poised too, and by and by it would shape a word very carefully and gently, as if words were on the order of some delicate and tender substance, like, for instance, calf's-foot jelly. They must not be jostled or upset; they must not be hur-

ried or disturbed. They must be treated only with love, and it seemed to be a separate and rather private love, for if Papa rose from his papers in a hurry and strode into the parlor to find his gold pen or a clean sheet of writing paper, Mamma would shove the ledger back into the desk or even behind her hoopskirt which made a vast billow within her chair and also about and around it. And she would seize her embroidery and become most eagerly concerned with it, even though when Papa was gone again she might snatch up her scissors and rip out the fresh stitches, frowning as she did so. Or reach into the desk again or behind her hoopskirt, and poise her pencil another time. It was inexplicable that two nice gentlemen should be of such opposite minds about the ledger as Papa and Professor Cavendish.

3

AFTER BREAKFAST Wing Winfield kissed his three daughters a short fatherly peck and his wife a slightly longer, more husbandly one, gathered up his portfolio and his bulging umbrella, pulled on his black gum overshoes, with expectations of April showers, struggled into his broadcloth coat which befitted his position as the village

banker, and stepped out into the green and golden beauty of a fine spring day.

It was only a short distance to the bank, three blocks or so, and the elms and maples which lined the wide street were beginning to stir with life and sunlight. A few early shrubs of one kind or another made bright splotches of color in dooryards along the way. Most of the fences were of paling, painted white, and Wing's mind wandered to the Public Square in Columbus, where the state capitol was, and how wonderful he had thought the white picket fence about it in his boyhood on his first excited visit to the city. In his father's time those ten grassy acres had been the public grazing ground. Wing Winfield smiled. Only last week he had spent a day in Columbus, and things looked, well, different, to say the least. That was the way time accomplished its miracles of change, he guessed, but how far it all was from what he and Rand had planned, flat on their backs on Rand's bed, spread with a quilted comforter, gazing at the ceiling strung with spider web, turning their eyes to the window where the pale curled frond of ivy clutched the rain-swept stone.

If breakfast had been prompt, and it was this morning, the college bell rang just as Wing crossed the corner between the church and Town Hall; a fairly new church with an ornamental, slightly unholy spire. The time was when the upstairs of the Town Hall had been a good enough place for religious meeting: Wing could remem-

ber. Across the street the budding elms half hid the other two churches, and beyond the Town Hall was still another. People *ought* to be good, Wing thought, but to balance the four churches there was the saloon beyond the bank: the ladies who lived on the south side of town had to cross the street regularly in the block where the saloon was, then double back on themselves a couple of hundred yards farther on, and thus arrive at church of the Town Hall, having avoided the saloon altogether. And the ladies who lived to the east had to stay on the north side of the street until they reached the corner where the churches were, then cross to the south and turn eastward the few steps to where the bank was, that is, on the rare occasions when a lady had any business at the bank, if she were a widow perhaps and had neither son nor brother to look after her affairs.

Wing heard the college bell now, but he was busy watching his feet on the planks that had been laid to bridge the muddy crossing. Showers had fallen in the night and water still rippled in uncountable small pools the size of horses' hoofs or ran in crisscross rivulets along the carriage tracks or in broad spreading lakes at the turning-around places. Out over the valley sang the voice of the college bell, and high on the hill young men hurried to their seats in classrooms where chalkdust hung like a white continuous cloud. His father's dream, a university, a good university whose sons were bearing its

name to the ends of the earth, but Wing Winfield moved busily within a more urgent present: Heaven help the college, of course, he conceded; it would have to in these trying times; he had done his best. Work as he might, calculate as he might, there were still Gould and Vanderbilt and goodness knew who else at the head of unspeakable treacheries. As for Grant and gold, the damage was done, and so with the Union Pacific scandals. Troubled days, worrisome days, and now from Washington the unbelievable facts of the "salary grab," and from Vienna and other foreign cities, vexatious news. Wing set his feet on the solid board walk in front of the post office, which occupied the downstairs front of the Town Hall building. At the edge of the street a wagon team gurgled at the watering trough: the bay raised his head with a shake and a whinny; the sorrel looked up, bared his teeth, bent, and drank deeply. The village was wide-awake now; the day had begun. Men swept the steps of their places of business; housewives moved decorously from one shop to another, their baskets the symbols of their respectable errands. How styles did change—hoops and bell hoops and now the threat of shifting it all toward the rear. Impossible! With three daughters and a wife to costume Wing was glad he had bought Louanna that sewing machine, if she *had* demanded a puffer and braider and even an "etcher" to fasten onto it and by means of which she had embellished even Amy's clothing with every manner of

trimming, braids and ruffles and what not, all strung together like popcorn and cranberries and tinsel on a Christmas tree.

His breath came and went with a swift, sickening haste. Where would their dresses and puffs and gewgaws come from if, for instance, European credit gave out entirely? What of the railroads half finished, spanning the nation like steel dreams with wooden crossties? What of iron, anyway, and silver and gold and wheat? Deflation, gold, inflation, currency, "cheap money," tariffs: yes, the university would have to get along by itself; Wing Winfield had no time to bother with it, no time for concern with affairs of the heart or mind, or least of all, with sentiment. There the university was; his money was in it and his father's money: Josiah Winfield's money. His name drifted without form, without substance, to the lips. It was a name now; no more. A name on a bank and a building and a stone: *Josiah Winfield*. His son entered his bank and laid the packet of papers upon a table. There was Josiah Winfield's desk, his chair. A year ago Jud Kelton had covered the seat with new leather. It was a good chair. Wing thought: my own son may sit in it some day. His face flushed. Louanna and her poetry. Louanna and her mind. A willful and peculiar, perhaps not altogether a righteous, woman. But he loved her so much! Her small hands were never anything but tender and soft, in spite of the work she had to do, with all the children, and only

Mary to help. There should be a wash-woman as well as a hired girl, but with times as they were. . . .

There should be a boy to sweep and clean the bank; dust thickened alike on floor and books and letters, and on what money there was. Old Trask was there, on a high stool, crouched over his columns of figures, but Trask had been there when Josiah Winfield was, younger, less crouched, but perpetually affixed to the stool just the same. Before the village had wakened, Trask was there on his stool; after it had gone to sleep, there he was, with his pen and his blotter. Sometimes the village said the bank would have failed long ago except for Trask. It did not matter. He was part of the bank like the iron money box, tight inside the stone wall. He no longer dusted the counter, the desk and the bookcase. Wing Winfield did that or it was never done. Dust or no dust, the bank sat secure in its dignity, exactly as the college stood serenely on the hill. Wing Winfield would have died for the bank, or he thought he would because his father had. He swished off the top of the desk, so there was space to attend to his correspondence.

"Trask!" he said.

"Yes, Wing," Trask said.

"Bad news," Wing said.

"Europe?" Trask said.

"Yes, and every place," Wing said.

Truly it looked as if there were no way out of it; already in anticipation the summer and fall loomed more dark and desperate than the terrible spring. Not that the utter universe was sad or that there was no refuge anywhere within it. Walking to work, Wing had marvelled at the infinite beauty of the morning sky, a familiar sight, yet all the more awesome for the sheer simplicity of its splendor. And there were the odors of daylight: clean washed air, and upon it the mysterious essence of April earth, flowering trees, young grass, half opened lilacs. Spring was here; life meant more in the spring, for some unfathomable reason. And the world went on, just as he had been thinking. Silly things happened, like the changes in styles, and the new attitudes women—*ladies*—were assuming. Colleges for women, and calisthenics and an active lawn game called ladies' cricket, all cheered and encouraged by men like Matthew Vassar. And the whole long list of labor-saving devices which gave women leisure in their homes and energy for mischief outside of them. Washing machines, sewing machines, pumps *in the kitchen,* instead of in the yard or on the back stoop. Gas lights for the millions, and permanent bathtubs in rooms completely to themselves, and wasted for every other purpose. Hard times indeed; strange unbelievable times.

And a wife who wrote with dogged persistence in a locked-up ledger! Oh, he knew; he had seen her hustle to

sneak it out of the way. He even knew two lines of a poem not quite consumed in the fire, charred and soiled from the ashes from which he had lifted it:

> How strange the pow'r of Love; how strong its spell,
> Devising Heaven from this earthl

But there one corner of the paper was burnt, half sparing him the awful conviction that Louanna had inscribed a profane word in actual black and white. His own wife. And the import of the couplet left him unnerved and ill at ease. He had not felt that the force of her affection for him was so overwhelming. In fact he was reasonably certain that it was not.

4

THE ROAD to the top of the hill had been graded and widened so that carriages could be drawn up and down with perfect safety, but Mrs. Wainwright seldom descended to the village, not even to visit her daughter or attend Sabbath services. She had poor health, and for a great many years it had been as if those words should be spelled with capital letters, since they served to answer for

every insufficiency of body or of spirit. But after all, nothing carried with it so clear a connotation of refinement, or one so impervious to question. Mrs. Wainwright had poor health, an irrevocable fact beyond reproof or dispute, and if she never met with the church ladies to help sew for the heathen it was permissible and proper, not plain laziness as with Miss Rebecca, who always wanted to cut out instead of stitch, because she said her eyes hurt her.

Over and over the village said that Rebecca Wainwright ought to get down on her knees in thankfulness that she had not married that terrible Professor Burke who had finally looked the board of trustees square in the face and admitted that he could not honestly believe every word in the Bible! But instead, she was supposed to have made a fearful scene, trying her poor father's patience to the utmost, and even refusing to teach her Sunday school class or go to prayer meeting, though that was probably for shame, since the whole village knew that she and Professor Burke had been engaged to marry. Three years or more, and hardly a person had caught more than a glimpse of Rebecca Wainwright; then one Easter morning there she was in the family pew, looking as white and washed with sorrow as the long-flowered lilies in front of the pulpit. Nobody knew for sure *what* had become of the professor: the college had got rid of him fast enough, and rumor said his disgrace was so deep that no other institution would ever dare hire him. By that time the North

and South were at war and so many men killed or missing that he might easily be among them. At least that should have been a fine chance to expiate his wickedness, but of course no one knew except by hearsay whether or not he went, unless Rebecca did, and she never said. Little by little she began going to the places she had gone and doing the things she had done before the professor had come to the village. But there was a difference. About her like an aura hovered the conviction that henceforth the village must remain on the outside of her instead of entering into her identity the way it had to with persons who were actually one with it. And resentment kept flaring up in crisp tiny flames that reached out and scorched Rebecca in front of the church after regular worship or Thursday evening prayer service, and at the sewings for the heathen. Little sharp flames of words which linked Professor Burke's name and her own, yet laid waste an expanse between her heart and her memory of him which she should never again be able to render bright and living; never in the world.

Only once in a very long time the pressure of his fingers was firm on her arm, along the wet wintry path beside the edge of the quarry. The slight soundless breeze moved out of the dark and enveloped them, leaving Louanna without in a far alien sphere where she might shriek as she pleased at Wing Winfield and Elias Rand, inconsequential youths who *would* have to show off by shinnying

up the quarry face like a couple of queer, dark-bearded monkeys.

In the white gloom of midwinter evenings, suddenly, faintly, there might come the crunch of his step on the snowy path, but going to the door in soft haste, lest her mother should notice, he had melted like magic, spun into space, hidden himself behind a veil of snowflakes. Only the tents that were cedar trees stood in a bivouac of tall peaked whiteness. The top of the hedge was a ridge of snow: maybe he could be stooped behind that, playfully expecting her to run out to him, laughing in the night, crying his name to the silence.

"Rebecca!" Mrs. Wainwright said, from beside the fire. "What on earth are you doing out there? Do shut that door."

"Towser whined," Rebecca said. "I thought he wanted in, but he's gone again."

"Here he is, on the hearth," Mrs. Wainwright said. "You saw him yourself, less than a minute ago. You reached down and petted him and spoke to him by name."

"Oh," Rebecca said. "Oh.—I guess the storm is over. It has stopped snowing and the clouds are moving fast. Maybe tomorrow will be fair."

But what did she care whether a day were fine or foul, or whether it came at all, with months of them dragging by, one the same as another, and nothing to look forward to but dusting her father's books over and over, and heat-

ing salt bags for her mother's neuralgia, and milking old Bess at dawn and sundown, and feeding the square black cookstove with beech and sycamore sticks?

Out in the world another kind of life went on: people married and were happy together, spending the first blissful days at Niagara Falls or Cape May or Newport or Saratoga, though it was said that young ladies and gentlemen oftener went to the watering places to *find* a mate than to enjoy them with a newly acquired one. But Niagara Falls, Niagara Falls!—and now she should never see it as she and her lover had blithely planned, after the conjuring tricks, or on the way home from church, or strolling on the gusty campus where round-bellied pigeons scolded the winter wind.

She kept feeling, as she had felt from earliest consciousness, that everybody on earth was older or younger than herself. Beyond the one abyss, her parents, weary and frail and aged; her father bothered by all the world outside of his books, her mother only at peace with her familiar pains. And in the other direction, Louanna, for their brothers were so far away that they no longer counted, and their baby sister was eternally an angel whose small wings drooped with memory and the weight of the periwinkle which had spread a green cover above her for nearly forty years.

As for the students, crashing in and out of the dormitories or stamping along the pathway before her father's

house, here were mere children, heedless and irresponsible. They stared at her with eyes which belied their gayly aspiring sidewhiskers: Rebecca was sorry for them; they were so innocent and there was so much, not written in books, that they should have to learn.

Even the new Professor Cavendish was little more than one of them, tall and straight as the second-growth hickory rising on the hills to the north. He had come in September, as life and excitement and change of whatever sort must forever come in September, after a season of quiet like death, and he was not only new to the department of English literature but apparently to human activity as well: his face was so clean, his hat so shiny, his books so neatly equipped with fresh ribbon page-markers, his portfolio so meticulously tidy, as if it and the lesson-leaves within it had only this instant been fashioned to the order of his craft.

The Elizabethans were his forte and their poetry his passion. Shakespeare he worshipped with an ardor which brought hot beads of rapture to his temples, and strange quick tremors of appreciation to the classes before which he recited:

> "When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
> And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
> Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
> Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held. . . ."

There was no doubt of it: Professor Cavendish was an acquisition. Both village and university were proud of him, but Rebecca Wainwright barely touched his hand at the instructors' reception. For one thing her hands were rough from the Monday's washing, for she had no Doty's Washer as Louanna did, nor a Universal Wringer, with cog-wheels, an admirable invention for saving labor and time and the beauty of one's fingers. But mostly it was because Professor Cavendish was as remote from her as if he had never walked the streets of the same village, nor carried the same books home from the college library, nor even sat in the sitting room beside the very table where Professor Burke had once arranged his mysterious tricks.

It was as if some part of her had died which could not rise again, and she told herself that this fervent scholar made no link with the memory of any dream of it, but she knew as she thought that, that Professor Cavendish and Professor Burke and other young teachers who had come and must inevitably vanish—as well as the older men, the president himself, and her father the dean, and the professors of classical and of modern languages and of elocution and science and mathematics and such other subjects as there were—were irrefutably associated, the one with the other. And all that they were, and every intricacy into which their minds might lead them, were incalculably fused into the same endeavor, so that by and

by the individual facts of them must be lost like tiny particles of sand in the sea, and only the college would survive to forget them, who had struggled by their lamps at night, that *it* might not be forgotten.

But how Professor Burke had laughed and jollied, exactly as if he had not a care in the world or one serious question to be answered, even to himself. And how warm-pink his cheeks, with the boon of fresh air, though it really was dangerous to most people, however eager they were to take up the fashionable fads of health culture.

He had seemed old to her then, but he was young to her now that she was older than almost everybody; older than the dark ivy vines which tapped on the third story windows of buildings which were also younger than she.

5

DOWN THE hill from the college, on the level plot between the street and the beginning of the slope, the Female Seminary occupied a cluster of stiff frame buildings with forbidding fronts. Wing Winfield's house faced the Seminary, and when Aunt Rebecca came to call she would sometimes tell the little girls that when she was a child there was nothing to break the bare outline of the

hillside but the straggling fences, the roaming hogs and cattle, and the stray beech and butternut trees which had by chance escaped the devastating axe.

A short distance to the west the land started rising again until, if one climbed the steep and devious path, one stood on the summit of Sugar Lump and commanded a panorama of the spreading valley. The village never tired of contending that the spectacle was superior from one hill than from another, but the fact was that the glacier had been impartial: the hills were actually of a height, and the view itself a matter of choice and of eyesight and of atmospheric benevolence.

Aunt Rebecca related too, how once the squirrels on Sugar Lump had chattered with such shrill incessancy that nervous citizens had risen in the night and felled an entire hillside of forest: the little girls laughed at that; it was the funnier for coming from Aunt Rebecca who smiled no oftener than Papa. The whole village knew the story. It belonged to the village just as the college did and Papa's black walnut house, and the way Grandfather Winfield had died, in a puddle of blood that was still a brown circle of horror in the worn hall carpet.

From the front windows Alice and Lottie liked to watch the young ladies across the street at the Seminary, especially when it was the hour for their promenade, arm in arm by twos, with a lady teacher at the head and foot of the column.

There was room in the width of the walk for the four small feet of two young ladies at once, but their hoop-skirts reached like umbrellas out over the grass at the sides, even brushing the trunks of the trees toward the street and the palings of fences toward the houses. In a little while the procession would be back again, the young ladies drooping from the exertion, and oh, the most fun of all!—sometimes at a short distance the young men followed, their hats on the backs of their heads, their canes twirling with the most waggish gestures, and occasionally the more forward of them were rude enough to sing or indulge in catcalls. Then, like mother hens before a threatening shower, the lady teachers would hustle their charges, and the gate would latch behind the whole excitement: the show was over and done with, though once in a while, if they looked very carefully, Alice and Lottie might observe a curtain ever so cautiously fluttered.

The young gentlemen were bolder. They stood on the steps by the gate, and their voices were deeply persuasive with melody. Sometimes the song was *Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming*, but that was not half as thrilling as *Little Brown Jug*, which brought the lady teachers upon them in a hurry, with the accompaniment of slamming doors and even a waving ruler!

All day long it was nice to think of the young ladies going about their lessons inside the buildings: mental and written arithmetic, English grammar and parsing, orthog-

raphy and the spoken word, botany, decorative needlework; history and geography and the piano, *everything* a young lady needed, so Mamma said, to make her an ornament to the social sphere.

But Mamma smiled to one side when she said that. Mamma had begged to attend classes in the college, sitting in classrooms with young gentlemen and reciting with them, as young ladies were doing now in more and more colleges throughout the country, not that it could ever be the proper thing or in capacity with a woman's talents, as most colleges recognized when their standard Ladies' Course omitted Latin and Greek. Right here on the hill, one young lady *had* gone through the college, all the way and with excellent marks, though the professors stuttered and blushed through the intimate sessions of physiology and botany, skipping certain passages, or fumbling with papers when at last kidneys and intestines and stamens and pistils and pollen could be avoided no longer, as words or as facts.

Of course Alice and Lottie did not know that. They knew the professors as wise tired men like Grandpapa Wainwright, who struggled drearily up the hill, their kerosene cans full against another night's pursuit of knowledge, the potato sometimes falling off the end of the spout and the liquid dripping down a pedantic pants leg.

Always the professors had to study. They were not

satisfied with knowing more than everybody else. They must keep ahead of their inquisitive selves. And if their wives were dowdy, their children's fingers occasionally sticking, blue and cold, from the worn-out ends of their mittens, the village voiced the prompt excuse that professors had to have books, while it complacently forgot that wives were dowdy and children cold where books were never bought at all.

Wing Winfield's parlor was lined with books he never read because he was too busy—*The Scarlet Letter, The House of the Seven Gables, The Guardian Angel*—stories that men had put upon pages because they had time enough, and because they were not afraid to think out the reasons for living and loving and dying, so that the people who inhabited their brains could be set on paper, doing all that and more.

Louanna read, when she was not puzzling over the complexities of her Wheeler & Wilson sewing machine, or teaching Amy to say *Papa,* or suggesting that Alice and Lottie sit quietly with their quilt pieces instead of teasing Mary for bread and butter and sugar.

Mrs. Stowe had written with noisy children about, though how she had done it Louanna could not guess. Maybe her offspring were boys, but briefly needing yards upon yards of lace on their petticoats and tucks and ruffles and tiny eye-straining buttonholes on their commonest dresses, and miles of braidwork in intricate designs, and

flutings and ruchings and curlicues until the head swam and one could barely reach out in time to grasp the harts-horn bottle. . . . At any rate, Mrs. Stowe had children, one of them an infant while *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was being written—perhaps even a nursing infant as Amy was now.

Louanna thought: when Amy is weaned I shall set aside a regular portion of time for my poetry, however decidedly Wing disapproves.

Wing said, "Louanna, I hope you will seriously consider the consequences of too close application to matters outside a woman's usual realm. A great deal has been written and said on the subject."

"Yes," Louanna said. "Yes, Wing."

And of course there were the house and garden to attend to, and the milk and butter to look after, for every family kept a cow or two; and in the summer there was the fruit to put away for winter, either by drying or by preserving without sugar in the new glass jars with elastic rubber fastenings. Each season brought its special duties, even to families residing in town and with only an acre of premises to see to. The sewing was the worst, spring and fall, and now April had brought back with it the task of deciding on the warm weather toilettes: for herself, certainly a full suit of summer vigogne, and for the little girls a dress apiece of Victoria lawn or India mull—which should it be?—elaborated with insertion and rows of Valenciennes or Mechlin lace. Then there must be a

trip to the county seat for shoes: high black ones for Alice and Lottie, pink or blue kid for Amy. Oh, *where* was she to find that hour for poetry? Was there so much as a minute for poetry in the whole hurrying whirl of time?

6

PROFESSOR WAINWRIGHT was so weary of young men that often the very sight of one set him to trembling as with palsy. But that was mostly in vacations when he was supposed to be at peace: from September to June he was the shepherd and they were his sheep; he was their father and loved them like sons, or thought he did. The president was away a great deal, for the college never got over needing money and it was the president's business to set forth and raise it, wherever he could or by whatever means, usually impassioned pleading in its behalf or in the name of the denomination for which it stood. Then when the students got into trouble it was the duty of the dean to get them out, which he did with prayer and with sighs. He had aged rapidly after the war, and by 1873 was profoundly distressed if he had to climb out of bed at night and put on his trousers and coat and trudge through the dark to the entrance of Winfield Hall which

would be wrapped in silence the minute he pounded upon the door with the head of his cane. Yet there were nights in the year when not any amount of pounding would put an end to the bedlam: the night before the Flag Rush, for instance, and Halloween, and at initiation time. He could stuff his nightshirt down into his pants in a thousand frenzies of haste and hoist his braces up over his shoulders while his wife murmured, "James . . . James. . . . Come back to bed! They won't mind you." Nor would they, intent as they were on riding one of their fellows on a fence rail snatched from the lane behind the buildings, and along which old Bess and her calf as well as the president's big-uddered Guernsey wandered down hill to the grassy valley north of the college woods.

Last Halloween the first-year classmen had dragged the Guernsey into the chapel tower where she placidly dropped dung and chewed her cud till morning. They never bothered old Bess who hated students, lowering her head and short sharp horns with determined menace. Rebecca was the only person who could catch her, let alone milk her, and often she was forced to chase her up the lane and all over the miry barnyard. When at last the pails were brought into the kitchen, brimming white unless old Bess had stepped in them, Professor Wainwright had to have a mug of warm milk, right away before the foam settled. It fed the brain, he said.

But no matter how well the brain were fed, it could do

no more than motivate the long dismal dissertations on philosophy which no longer seemed to gather vitality from one year to another, in spite of the hours of reading and making notations which Professor Wainwright called "gleaning fresh information" or "advancing with the spirit of enlightenment." Jane Wainwright had long ago given up hope of consultation with her husband regarding household affairs: better to let them drag on as they might, money or no money, hope or no hope. Rebecca could manage, with the cow and chickens and garden, but once in a while there had to be a bit of cash and there never was! Maybe the professors were paid and maybe they were not: times were worse and worse, though the ladies never constructed a very definite idea of what was happening: Washington and New York City were the centers of it, to be sure, and the war had been part of the reason, but the truth was enigmatical and obscure; it resolved itself finally into the necessities of ever so tactfully suggesting to Wing Winfield that in a like predicament his father would most certainly have done something, and of rejuvenating their best black silks for another Easter and another year.

They never quite gathered courage to make the tactful suggestion, though often the desperate professors had not a shilling among them, and the main door was all but off Winfield Hall, hanging disreputably by a single hinge until one Saturday the students repaired it. As for the

black silks, Rebecca borrowed Louanna's new polonaise pattern and set to work. First she ripped the dresses apart and examined every breadth. Then she steeped a pair of worn-out black kid gloves in a quart of hot water for an hour, and finally sponged the silk with the liquid, pressing it on the side which had been sponged.

"It looks nice," Mrs. Wainwright said. "It shines like new."

"Yes," Rebecca said, "and wait till I get the skirts finished! If I make the foundation of English cambric there will be plenty of silk for the flounce. And do you think I'll dare draw them to the back just a little? Mine, anyway? Or would it look giddy?"

"Maybe you might a trifle," Mrs. Wainwright said. "I don't know what to think of the styles. Skirts have been big for so long, I can't help but wonder what the world is coming to."

So they contrived and managed, a pinch here and a doing without in some other direction. It was the same in the dormitories, and when Rebecca went out in the morning to milk and to bring in the wood for cooking breakfast, she could see the students hurrying from the spring with their buckets of water. Always they were in the woods, cutting fuel for their cooking and for warming their rooms: how they must puff from carrying it up three flights, as many of them had to. If the wind was right, the fragrance of frying bacon drifted from the buildings,

for most of the young gentlemen did their own cooking. Of course the wealthier ones boarded in clubs in the village, but that was sinfully expensive—as much as three or three and a half dollars a week!

But education was worth striving for. Another generation, at this rate, and women should really have a place in it and a welcome at schools and colleges. Though the idea of their attending side by side with young men was an extreme one should have to get used to, even if it became the usual and accepted behavior. Even if nice young ladies did it. Perhaps there was actually less opposition than one would think, as evident as it was that young ladies craved the society of the opposite sex and would resort to almost any means to indulge in it. The village marked with disapproval the laughing young crowd around the spring mornings and evenings, but it was hard to prove that such meetings were the result of direct intention: young women had to have water, for ablutions and occasional drinking; so did young men. It was scarcely possible to do anything about it.

There was one thing to be done, though, and that was to dig a well on the campus of the Female Seminary. And how the village fretted at the young men's reaction to that! A pail of soft soap, a dark night, and the young ladies were back at the spring again. Professor Wainwright guessed, but could never establish, which reprobates had done it. They should have been dealt with

severely. The principal of the Seminary told the president so, in a letter replete with indignity and ladylike reproach.

As for the very young, the Seminary had absorbed the old Female College: it no longer accepted preparatory students as when Rebecca and Louanna were children. Their brothers had attended the public school which Josiah Winfield had established, but lately public money had run low and the school functioned irregularly: the village lamented the facts that Josiah was long dead and times were miserable again, and that Wing Winfield gave more thought to his bank than to his community, which only dimly recognized the bank as its supreme vitality. Alice and Lottie went to Miss Dowe's select school, where they scribbled on quantities of foolscap and wept silent tears for the unhappy mate who must stand in the corner or be dunce. The schoolroom was Miss Dowe's second parlor, bereft of its horsehair chairs and sofa, empty of every emblem of corporeal comfort since it now must serve as fountain for the mind. And Miss Dowe herself was the fountainhead, her skirts respectably disciplined by a home-made *porte-jupe*, her party hair piled on her head in broad daylight, because there was never any place to go after supper, nor any gentleman to take her there, nor anything to do but sit in the front parlor with the lamp turned just so high. At nine she would let Tabby out to scratch a minute under the monthly roses, then call her in again, *"Here, Tabby, Tabby, Tabby,"* and so to bed

to get a good rest before the pupils should begin arriving in the morning, with handfuls of first spring flowers for her whatnot vases, and bonnets to be untied and examples to be corrected, on and on throughout another day.

Most of the dooryards in the village looked alike, with the same depth between fence and stoop, the same prim palings between yard and sidewalk, a gate which either rattled or squeaked, stuck when the hoop was lifted, or swung in and out with so sudden a menace to the knee-caps that one was happy to be safely beyond its reach, one way or the other.

On the edge of every stoop was an iron scraper. From October to May the village was muddy. People were used to it. Most of the men wore cowhide boots, and there were the new style gum overshoes. Board sidewalks helped, and stepping-stones, and planks reaching like hope, from one blessed refuge to another.

The village housewives hated the mud: Louanna, whose house was still finer than most; Rebecca, who looked after her father's house because of Mrs. Wainwright's poor health; Miss Dowe, who would never be a wife, but whose lot it was to sweep and scrub and who hated the mud, therefore, with as stern a hatred as any.

Louanna had pleaded and coaxed, but Wing Winfield would not have a bay window built into the parlor. The house was as his father had made it and it should stay

that way as long as he had the say of it. But she could have lace curtains if she wanted, and white shades on rollers, which were the *very latest,* and even lambrequins, if that would make her any happier. And there might be more pictures on the walls, since fashion seemed to require it, hung not by cord, which was entirely out of date, but by the new galvanized wire, which was infinitely stouter. If none was to be had at the hardware store, Wing would lay in a supply the first time he drove to the county seat.

For ornaments, there were brackets, crowded with shells, statuettes, decorative china, porcelain dogs and cats, bouquets, waxed autumn leaves in vases, bunches of dried grasses and heads of grain. Last summer and fall Louanna and Alice and Lottie had roamed in the college woods, gathering different varieties of ferns and gay leaves which they pressed with an iron rubbed with beeswax. Bunches of these were pinned to the lower halves of the shades and on the curtains, clustered on the lambrequins or grouped over the pictures until the room was a bower of drying foliage.

Miss Dowe had bunches of pressed leaves too. Hers were extremely glossy because she had pressed hard and used lots of beeswax. Rebecca Wainwright's were not so nice. She had taken the notion for them too late in the fall, and the rains had already set in. All of her specimens were the same color, yellow faded to brown. Rain

had drenched from them the last glint of beauty the light frosts had left there.

Anyway, what was the use of it? Nobody called now but elderly ladies who sat close to Mrs. Wainwright and whispered of aches and symptoms. Then there were young men, too timid to speak to the dean on the campus: they whispered too, lest Rebecca and her mother overhear their griefs.

No matter how carefully she polished the lamp chimneys with crumpled newspaper, or trimmed the wicks, or pinned back the curtains to let the sunlight in, Rebecca felt that the rooms were dark: philosophy is a poor illumination for a household. What of the light of love which had glowed briefly with the coming of Professor Burke? Her heart leaped and fell, leaped and fell. She tried to quiet it, knowing it stirred in vain. Her father had nightmare and she went in to waken him, a shouting old scholar with his white beard a tangle on the counterpane. Her mother slumbered beside him, a small figure topped by a white nightcap. No use, no use, Rebecca thought, back in her own room, lacing her fingers in and out. Professor Burke was gone, lost, departed, as men leave in death, forever and ever.

In stark sudden anguish she remembered Miss Sarah Matthews and Dulcie Harper and the other old maids who had been part of the village and had at last withdrawn themselves from its thrusts and its levities, a little

glad perhaps when the cold calm silence of the mill pond or the hot black confusion of lung fever reached out like enfolding arms and gathered them in.

From her window the northern hills lay lavender with starlight. To the east was the quarry where they had walked together that unforgotten day, and beyond the lane and the barnyard the woods where their farewell had been said, but that was an hour she could not bear to think about: she turned from it with the physical gesture of turning from the window, though the window had nothing to do with it. It was the same as if it were a thick wall of stone which would never open to release her.

April! An hour of lacy green, a moment of mating, an epoch in the ageless movement of the earth. Life flowed out of the name itself and into the being. Bloodroot sprang from the ruins of old logs, the strength of the soil in the visible symbol of its vigor. Ferns uncurled under the grey beeches. Snakes sought the sun, and the first timid bee climbed skyward in a dizzy spiral.

Two weeks more and the geraniums could go out in their beds, a quarter-moon and a diamond, one on either side of the front yard path. Two weeks more and the sleeping sorrow of the heart would thud like hammers in the arteries. Anything could happen in April: death or rapture or fresh, terrible despair.

Rebecca lay down, but she could not sleep for listening for her father. When he called out it broke her

mother's rest, unless he was wakened at once and quieted. But perhaps he was settled for the remainder of the night. He must not study so hard. He was getting old and his frame was too slight to safely sustain the tumult of the intellect.

7

THE SUN was so warm that it was safe to sit on the board platform between the kitchen porch and the woodshed. Lottie could sit there as long as she pleased and Mary would not call from her baking: "Lottie, you get straight up off that damp platform!" Mamma would not come softly to the door and say, "Oh, there you are, dear. Well, I don't believe I would sit on those cold boards."

Papa would not stalk up the gravel path and demand: "Lottie, what have I told you about caring for your health?"

Alice would not fuss: "Get up, Lottie! What if Mamma were to see you?"

It was wonderful to be at peace with the whole wide world, just watching a robin pull on a worm that hated dreadfully to be drawn out of the soft ground which was probably his home, and for all anybody knew, he had a

wife-worm and a dozen little baby worms safe and sound down deep inside it.

But it was wonderful to watch the robin just the same. A robin could be very beautiful after a long dull time in which nothing happened but snow and two nights of croup and a felon that was still a pale puckery place on one's biggest finger, and learning the times-tables through the fives, and Saint Nicholas' visit, flowing whiskers and all, right out in plain sight in the minister's parlor.

That had been a most beautiful time, nearly as lovely as this. It had happened at the Sunday school entertainment the night before Christmas, with a great tree trimmed with real wax candles, and just as everybody was gathering up wraps ready to go home, who should leap out of the night but old Saint Nick himself, with a huge hearty laugh exactly like Mr. Morris, the butcher's, and from his pack every child was given a sweet and an apple. A fine red apple, the shiniest that ever was.

It did not seem that such a time could ever have been, riding home through the snow afterward, the sleighbells singing their little tinkling song all the way. Or Lottie guessed it was all the way: the warmth of the crowded parsonage had made her sleepy, and the sleigh was a black cave of buffalo robes, snug and safe and silent except for the light gay tune of the bells. Now the sun was so hot and yellow it was impossible that snow had drifted high

and feathery, straight up over this platform, onto the kitchen porch and against the door; had piled and packed on the north side of the woodshed until Papa had put on his storm boots and red muffler and black velvet ear-warmers and gone out into the thick of it and shovelled and shovelled and shovelled.

Mary made the buckwheat cakes while he was out, and how good they smelled and how good they were! Papa ate six, as big around as his breakfast plate—ivory with pale blue flower sprays, which had been part of Grandmother Winfield's bridal china.

Over there by the hedge the snow had piled higher than anywhere and the sparrows had hopped about on top of the whiteness. Now the crocuses were up and already a yellow one had bloomed. The hellebore by the gate was bright green. In their own yard, with quince trees for roosts, the hens were cackling like sixty.

Mamma stood in the doorway, after all.

"Come, Lottie," she said. "Papa has decided we shall go to the county seat. The day is fine and we want you fitted with new shoes."

Alice already had her best dress on and was brushing her bonnet. Amy stood up in her little bed and threw her woolen dog with bead eyes out onto the rag carpet.

Papa went to the barn to hitch up. Mamma was dressed in her Easter basque. But her camel's hair polonaise was over her arm and she had a laprobe besides. Suppose it

turned cold! They must remember that it was only April.

It was seven miles to the county seat and the road was quite dry but there was no flying dust as yet. That was nice. There was no pleasure in going in the summer, because of it, and even coming home from the county fair last fall their mouths were as dry as cotton batting.

Papa's new bays trotted smoothly; the wheels left thin little tracks like two ribbons of joy, stretching away from the village.

The team was spirited, but Papa was a match for them. And there were safety bridles and lines. Papa explained that they could neither buck, balk, jump nor run away, and added that just knowing it took half the thrill out of driving—for him. While Papa talked one felt as safe as in one's own bed in the walnut house, but looking ahead, up at the horses, one vaguely wished that they were Mamma's fat old Dolly who had become slow and dependable with age.

But the day was not created especially for Lottie, as much as she liked to pretend that it was, her hand tight in Alice's; fields and farmhouses and woodlands flashing by their happy vision.

"The season is going to be early," Louanna said, unbuttoning her basque and waist and corset cover and undervest for Amy, who whimpered with sleepiness and excitement.

"Yes," Wing Winfield said.

Does he not see the beauty of the springtime? Louanna asked herself. What would he say if I told him that to me dandelions are stars lost from the heavens?—

"Wing—" she said. "Please listen a minute, Wing."

"Papa," Alice said, "do look at the Texas ponies! Over in the field, there. Aren't they beauties?"

And certainly the field was full of spotted ponies, with a sprinkling of plain ones, cream or bay. They milled about the pasture, tossing their heads at the fences, their soft long manes flying.

"Where do they come from, Papa?" Lottie said.

"The West," Wing Winfield said. "Some people call them *mustangs*. Men bring them from the West in cattle cars, then drive them into a field that way and offer them for sale."

"They are pretty," Alice said.

"Yes, and they can run," Wing Winfield said. "But it takes a pair of them to pull as much as a horse. And they are as wild as wolves. I should hate to break one."

"I remember the first drove I ever saw," Louanna said gently. "I was on my way home from school. Their eyes rolled so I was frightened. I ran into a dooryard to be safe behind the fence. Down the street the ponies went on a gallop. The drovers could scarcely keep up with them."

In her heart she said: he seems as far away from me as if we had never been any closer together than we are

sitting here in broad daylight. Perhaps the body and the spirit are more widely separated than we have been led to believe. A part of me loves Wing, I suppose, and that much of me must be his wife. But the rest slips out into the dark or the mist or the sunlight. It never comes back to him. It is as completely gone as if I were dead and buried. He could not find it if he tried.

"Is Amy asleep?" Wing said.

"I think so," Louanna said. "I cannot see her eyes very well for the cover."

"I hope she will not cry in the shops," Wing said.

"Yes," Louanna said. "I hope so too."

The road wound through hills which were like the hills where the village was, yet strangely unfamiliar. Here were hills they did not see every day; and the very fact that the difference was not a manifest matter of form or size, of certain trees growing upon them, or of sheep grazing beside their rocky pathways, made them the more mysterious and remote. The first hill to the left, leaving the village, was the curious mound the Indians had called The Crocodile before the first settlers came. Alice and Lottie had never seen the crude earthen effigy which sprawled across its flat wide top. They had wanted to ask Papa about it as they passed, but Papa's eyebrows were drawn together in one of his scowls. Up and down, up and down the horses' feet beat on the imperturbable dust. Woodlots and pasture lands were left behind; hills were

climbed and descended. Halfway to the county seat Papa and the little girls got out and walked up the highest one of them, to spare the horses. Mamma drove with the free hand she had not curved around Amy. At the crest of the hill she drew the team to a stop and the others caught up and got in again. Oh, it was a marvelous journey, and barely begun. Alice and Lottie squeezed each other's fingers with the sheer happiness of it.

The courthouse stood in the middle of a square with hitching racks around the inside and shops about the outside. Wing Winfield drove to the livery stable behind the hotel on the east side of the square so that the horses would be well looked after while the family visited the shops.

In the stores the little girls were speechless with shyness and delight. Their shoes were black kid with buttons. Louanna would have preferred blue for Amy, but only the pink ones fit her. And there were lengths of calico and mull, and worsteds as fine and soft as Amarila had ever woven on the great loom. One shop was for nothing but hats. Its window was full of them, so round and flat and *shapeless* after bonnets! Louanna told Wing that she certainly could not imagine herself in one of them. But he took a fancy to an elegant deep-purple one with a bow square in the center of the front and a curled plume piled behind it, so there was nothing to do but go in and buy it. He wanted her to have a front comb too, and

purchased that, though Louanna was sure it would tire her head and probably push her braids uncomfortably backward.

The sun was in their eyes on the way home. Then it melted behind the hills in a wide flood of crimson, and twilight fell over the earth like the veil of a beautiful and weary woman. The bays still stepped proudly in an even rhythm, but Wing Winfield did not need to urge them now: they were eager to get home. From the mill pond came the voices of the first frogs: "It *is* spring!" Louanna said. "Now I know the winter is over in earnest. Oh, I am afraid of spring! It is so terrible and so lovely, sometimes it is almost more than one can bear."

"Nonsense," her husband said. "I am surprised at you, Louanna." But better not tell her that half of what she said any more sounded flighty. He should have to bear *that* as best he could. As for poetry, whatever of beauty and compassion and verity there was to it had vanished now: maybe it lay under the blanket of wakening grass that covered Rand: maybe it had never been, and was lost as a dream is lost, with nothing by which to remember it.

And there was Professor Cavendish, with his mustache and crisp auburn beard, neatly trimmed to the precise outline of his chin, even allowing for the deep valley of dimple which bisected it squarely.

There had been some excuse for Rand to recite poetry, with his strong resonant voice, and all of life before him.

Professor Cavendish sang tenor in the choir, and poetry could never mean anything to him but standing up before a class and telling the young men *who* had written *what*, a matter of names and facts from which all glamour had irrefutably been lifted. And anyone with a tongue and a scrap of memory could quote: Wing himself had quoted as a boy, on program days, with a passionate reluctance, his trembling fingers finding and losing the penny in his pocket, the side seam of his pantaloons, the waistcoat button Miss Sarah Matthews would censure him for twisting.

As for poetry-talk in the parlor, over tea cups especially, it would have to be stopped—in defense of good taste and Louanna's reason, if nothing else. Oh, he could put up with it, Wing thought, lifting the reins lightly from the backs of the bays: he could stand anything there was any sense to; but drivel about lines and phrases made him sick—yes, actually sick, and he was not going to have it. Even then it was not so much cause as effect that he minded: Louanna in a sort of rapturous daze, looking out at the mulberry tree but not seeing it, holding her baby against her bosom but not seeing her either, and lately announcing that she did not intend to nurse Amy through her second summer, when everybody knew that was the most dangerous period of an infant's existence. All because Amy had bitten her once or twice, as if babies had not bitten their mothers since the beginnings of posterity. It was inhuman that she should force the little creature to

sip from a cup, spilling half of it on her pinafore, weeping and sputtering and reaching for the front of her mother's dress. Here was a direct and pitiful result of delving in abstractions unsuited to a woman's strength, either of frame or of fancy.

Anyway, it was a good thing Louanna had fetched the laprobe. Once in a while she acted with forethought. Their bundles of new shoes tight in their arms, Alice and Lottie slept as the bays dashed into the village. The lamplighter was starting on his rounds. The haze of supper-smoke folded the houses close to one another.

"If money were not so scarce," Wing Winfield said, "we should indulge in these excursions oftener. The children seem to enjoy them and it gives them a glimpse of the world."

"Yes," Louanna said.

"Ah," Amy said. "Ah, ah, ah."

Mary came out with the lantern to say supper was hot on the table, and to help them into the house.

8

OH TO be docile, ceaselessly, tirelessly docile, with never rebellion crouching before the heart, whining like a dog to be let in!

Louanna envied her sister who appeared to have forgotten everything except peach pudding recipes and how many balls of carpet rags the sitting room required. Surely the lot of a maiden must be preferable to this blind heritage of duty which placed her night after night in Wing Winfield's bed and meal after meal across from him at the table, so that she felt more than anything like one of Lottie's paper dolls which could be bent and folded and sat down in attitudes they must surely resent if the power of protest were only theirs along with incredible shapes and letter-paper ballgowns.

There was the problem of Amy, who could sleep well enough in her own little bed where she napped in the daytime. But no, Wing would have her in the big bed for fear she should become chilled or hungry and waken and disturb him: little he knew how drained of breast and spirit one faced the morning afterward. It was as if all of life were sapped away and only the structure left, and that structure must move through a thousand vicissitudes of daylight, carrying the heavy baby up and down the steep dangerous stairway, seeing Alice and Lottie off to school and welcoming them home; watching Mary in the kitchen and doing the dusting oneself, perfidiously wishing one had a melodeon instead of the best piano in the county, because then there would be so much less surface to polish!

In spite of despising herself for it, there were times

when Louanna wished she had never heard of Amarila Wing Winfield, let alone having to live in her house and handle her possessions day after day, with even Mary saying, "Poor, poor Mrs. Winfield. Wouldn't she turn over in her grave at thought of Lottie stirring mud in that saucer?" Or it was Alice with her feet on a chair or Amy patting hands on the wall paper, or even an indiscretion of Louanna's own, as if she had no business in her husband's house and was deliberately bent on the destruction of everything in it. Well, the slender white and gold angel *had* fluttered from the mantelpiece and been shattered to bits; the rounds were out of a couple of chairs; a rosebush had died and a cabinet leg broken off entirely: Louanna supposed that as much might have happened with anyone else there to see to things. She was careful to bleach the linens on the back-yard bushes, and at least they were washed with soap and not with Pretty Betty roots as in the old days. She forbade the children to run on the carpets or scuff their feet on the stairs. She kept new candles in the candle holders, and never discarded any article until it was worn out—and then only set it carefully in the ell chamber where with its contemporaries it served as a mute marker to Amarila's memory. And every year on the fifteenth of September Louanna would say: "Wing, just think—this is their anniversary!" Going to bed that night the walnut bed would seem strange and new, and if there were moonlight Wing would close the

blinds to keep it out. Twenty-five years . . . twenty-eight . . . thirty. . . .

If she could only get away from the house and the baby and the little girls' polite questions—and from Wing, this cloud of darkness might be lifted ever so slightly and she could be happy again. It was worth trying. Not, of course, that she could go to Europe like Mrs. Stowe: she would not go if she could—not and leave her children! Such behavior might do very well for Mrs. Stowe, but perhaps her baby was not as pretty as Amy and perhaps its chubby hands did not cling so, and perhaps Mrs. Stowe had no little girls as sweet as Lottie and Alice; seven and eight; the sweetest ages little girls could ever be.

No, Louanna would take a walk. She would climb the hill behind the Female Seminary, up the steep path where the dandelions clustered, past the beech tree where long ago Rebecca and Deborah and Martin and Samuel had awaited a glimpse of the wedding procession; past the college buildings with Wing's father's name on the largest and most imposing, along the path where she had played as a child, across the president's yard to see if the robins had this April nested in the lilac bush, up the short gravel walk—home!

She put on the purple hat and her best polonaise, which luckily had purple bows upon it, dozens and dozens of them, and masses of braidwork the entire distance around the edge. There were bows on the skirt too, with tucks

between them: it had taken her weeks to make the costume and while she was sewing on it she could not help thinking how much she could have done with her poetry in the same length of time, had she the right to so use it. But poetry was for evenings and stray hours when Wing might be away for certain, on trips to Columbus or the county seat or squirrel hunting north of the village, so that she was sure he would not come striding in when she least expected him as he was apt to when he was only gone to the bank, it was such a short walk from home.

Having decided on a trip to the hilltop, Louanna was in a flurry of excitement. It did not matter that a month ago she had made the same journey over the melting snow: this was different. She told herself that April always made a difference, and she felt that it still would after ages that she should never see. That was one of the delights one might expect to discover unaltered if one were granted the privilege of coming back to this earth after, say, five hundred seasons. Maybe the dandelions would be found untarnished; maybe the arbutus would be exactly the same, trailing along the rocky hillsides. Of course she would never know, but it was pleasant to think so. There was a wistful joy in believing that springtime would never change, however old the world.

Amy was having her afternoon nap; it was not yet time for Alice and Lottie to return from school; Mary was baking bread in the kitchen. There was no reason for it, but

Louanna's heart lifted with exaltation as she latched the gate behind her, crossed the street, and moved toward the hill. Of course it was silly to hope for so trivial a thing, and spring was too young for the hope not to be ridiculous, but suppose a jack-in-the-pulpit might have crept through the rotted leaves in a certain corner of the woods, where the little brook was, and suppose she should go by that path instead of the direct one, across the campus, and should find it there, a green fragile flower with slender brown lines along its delicate hood. Jack-in-the-pulpits had bloomed in that corner every springtime she could remember: she and Jonathan had searched for them when they were children, keeping a close watch for the copperheads which lurked in the shadows of old logs. She and Wing had wandered there once, a year after Rand's death, and Wing had said, "I have tried to believe that time would make a difference, but it has not. I have finished with lessons and with all the perturbations of deep thinking. I no longer desire to graduate; I shall concern myself with the affairs of the bank. Perhaps mine was never truthfully a scholar's calling."

Louanna said: "Do as you think best, Wing. Your friend was as dear to you as life, and perhaps some of that life has gone outward with him. It may be better to turn to ways which you did not share."

"I believe so," Wing said. "It seems the only thing to do."

From the beginning they had never been lovers in the complete sense which neither quite expected, but of which they were lovers enough to feel deprived. Walking up the hill Louanna looked back on her years with Wing as she would have looked back on the path and the descending slope and the houses and church spires beyond them. She wondered about love and (pausing a minute under the beech tree), about poetry. It was possible that a kinship existed between their separate illuminations, but *how* or *why* she could not answer herself. She did not care. A week had passed since the excursion to the county-seat: the weather continued dry and the farmers prophesied drouth, shaking their heads while they hurried on with their plowing. Far to the south Louanna could see men and plows moving in the furrows. Life was a cycle of seeds and flowers and harvest. She was vaguely sorry that it was so. Deep in the college woods, down the hill from where the jack-in-the-pulpits grew, there should be left a wild grapevine, thick and gnarled, swung from one great oak to another. Not in years had she been so far into the college woods: she would go there now and it would seem much the same as travelling in a distant country. Better than that, because memory could go with her there: big brothers, Martin and Samuel, clubbing the chestnuts that tumbled down for her and Jonathan to gather; Rebecca in a knitted blue hood, helping with the baskets, finding

sticks and stones for her brothers to hurl upward into the laden trees.

She was out of breath from climbing by the time she reached the top of the hill. There were the college buildings, to be sure, but she could see them any moment she wanted to peep out the front windows of the walnut house. The older ones she had seen all her life: the others would be there tomorrow and next day and ten years from now, if she desired to look at them. To the west, along the top of the hill, the graveyard lay like a green square of peace—better not think of Rand, better keep on going, straight to the college woods, one foot after the other. Her breath came more easily with the descent of the hill. She thought of her mother and Rebecca, at home as usual, she supposed: very likely Rebecca would be out working with her flowers. It was a perfect day for flowers. . . . She would take the east path out of the woods, and there she would be in the lane behind her father's house. But not yet, not yet. The very air swam with the quality of her excitement. Her temples beat with the exhilaration of guilt, for it was a novel sensation to be running away from one's household, if only for a few stolen minutes in the woods. She would be extra gentle with them all this evening, and if Wing chose to sit in the parlor she would not let her thoughts wander longingly in the direction of the writing desk, nor wish he had brought a parcel of figures home.

She would answer Alice's questions with patience and admire Lottie's paper dolls over and over. Maybe getting off by oneself *was* a help to the spirit. Maybe she would gather new courage just from this sweet hour alone.

No, the jack-in-the-pulpits had not bloomed. She had as good as known that there was no use looking. The ground under the beeches was dank with winter: April had wandered here scarcely at all. The silver branches were too closely intertwined for the sun to penetrate. Her skirts outspread like a great bell bound with purple, Louanna bent by a hollow log, her small feet hidden, her fingers searching the pungent mold. If there could be only a tiny blossom. . . . Yes. . . . No, here and there a curled spathe was barely emerging from the humus: it would be another week before she need bother to come back. There would be a miniature forest of them in ten days or so. The first of May—*that* was the time for jack-in-the-pulpits, but the season was so early she had thought—she had hoped. . . .

It was so senseless, so childish, to be dabbing at her eyes because of a thing like that, or to be disappointed at all over such a trifle. But suddenly it was as if she had pinned all of her dreams on a star which had scattered like dust into the farther firmament, and she was alone again, her feet set firmly on the earth from which she hastened to scramble. Her best gloves were soiled and her shoes were a sight. What would Wing say, if he were already there when she should enter the hall? She must

brush up a bit at her mother's, though how queerly they would look at her when she tried to explain.

And what a moment to meet Professor Cavendish, his cuffs immaculate even in the woods! They gleamed like patches of snow as he advanced along the path. There was no escaping him: in the whole deep world of the woods there was no refuge at all.

His hat was already off. One little glint of sun seeped through the beeches and touched his hair.

"Why, Mrs. Winfield," he said. "To think that I should find you here!"

"I used to come often," Louanna said simply. "I love these woods but now I rarely have time for them. Last fall the children and I came for ferns."

Inside of her the noise was terrific: her breast and forehead and wrists pounded all at once. Waves of light broke in front of her eyes, and outside her ears the ocean she would never see surged and billowed, billowed and surged, then burst into foam with a sudden *swish*. Professor Cavendish did not seem to notice.

"There is no place like the forest," he said, "for inspiration. I stroll here every day now that the weather is fine."

"I am ashamed for you to see me like this," Louanna said, blushing. "I was hunting for jack-in-the-pulpits and I am afraid I quite forgot myself. In fact, I must even have sat upon the ground."

He smiled. "I must confess," he said, "that I was watching. I first caught sight of you some minutes ago. It was impolite to watch, but I kept looking at you nevertheless. When you began crying I almost rushed to you."

"I hoped that they had bloomed," Louanna said. "It was nothing, but it meant a great deal to me."

"So you wept," he said. "How poetic! Tell me, how are you progressing with your verses? I have one or two of mine with me which I should like to show you. Or shall I recite them? One is about spring:

'The golden hour of spring is here,
The rill is loosed, the flower has opened;
The winter's darkness, cold and drear,
At this long last is broken.'"

"It is lovely," Louanna said, "but I think I had better sit down on this stump. I feel faint."

"Let me assist you," Professor Cavendish said.

"Do not be disturbed," Louanna said. "It will pass. Surely it is from bending over, there where I knelt in the leaves."

"Of course," Professor Cavendish said. He removed his hat and made a fan of it. After a minute Louanna sighed and smiled. The color returned to her face.

"I am glad I did not swoon," she said. "I wanted to tell

you about my new poem. It is about spring too; about April."

"Can you recite it?" he said.

"Alas, no," she said. "I have little time for poetry, as you know. And only poor attention to turn to it."

"That seems the lot of the female muse," he said.

"I sometimes wonder," Louanna said, "whether the passage of years will accomplish anything for women. I wonder what time will permit them to do with their minds, now being so ably developed."

"I do not know," he said. "What would you do with yours, if it were trained like a man's and allowed the same opportunity for expression?"

"I should write poetry," she said.

"You do very well as it is," he said.

"I try," she said, "but nothing will ever come of it. My husband disapproves of poetry, especially for women. He would never permit me to publish a volume of it. And I have nearly enough for as thick a book as H. H.'s or Mrs. Thaxter's. Then I would not feel that I had lived all my life in vain. There would be something of me left when I have passed away. Wing says there are my children, but I mean something more than that. Or at least different. My children are not myself. My poetry is an actual part of me."

"I know what you mean," he said. "But it is possible

that you regard the matter with too little hope. Is there no way to persuade Mr. Winfield that it is your *right*, indeed your *duty*, to do full justice to your lyric gift?"

"Oh, I fear not," Louanna said. "But I had never considered it in precisely that light. And surely after all, my verses are too frail and my poor talent too pitifully untutored to endure public scrutiny."

"Do not feel so," Professor Cavendish said. He dug the heel of his boot into the fresh black soil beside the stump. "I wish I might encourage you further. I wish I might instill within you that faith in your works which would lead you on to surmount every difficulty in the way of their accomplishment."

"You have helped a great deal," Louanna said, laying her hand in his. "But I must go now. I must have time to stop a minute with my mother and sister."

"May I escort you there?" Professor Cavendish said.

"No, thank you," Louanna said. "Go on with your stroll. I shall be quite all right."

"Then I shall remain here," he said. "Perhaps I shall seat myself upon the stump when you have left it. Perhaps I shall repeat some poetry for my own pleasure:

'Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,

Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!' "

"Ah, Shelley," Louanna said. "But how different it all is when one is a woman. One lacks the courage even to express oneself. One sees the truth but dares not seek words by which to snare it."

Her hand still lay in his: a small hand, its glove dark with the leafy mold. "I must hurry," she said quickly. "I shall remember what you have said. You have given me new strength. I shall speak to my husband one more time. Perhaps I may see my poems in print, after all."

"I hope so," he said. "And do not despair. Your work is worthy of perpetuation. You must make every effort to protect the world from its loss."

"Goodbye, goodbye," Louanna said. Oh, how radiant the moment and how sweet the forest as the afternoon sun slanted through it! But it was as if for an hour not even the trees had been part of the dream which had enfolded herself and Professor Cavendish. Poetry and the mind; beauty and the heart; peace, silence, sunlight. Her feet carried her up the path toward the college buildings; the red-brick back of Winfield Hall blazed like September zinnias. Along the shaft of sunset there was the graveyard again, the mounds huddled close to one another like children sleeping together. Now it was safe to think of Rand: death did not matter after talking with Professor Caven-

dish; it was a puzzle poetry could solve. . . . She would write and write, and meanwhile—perhaps this very evening—beg Wing to consider the publication of her book. But now the hour was later than she had thought; there was not time to call upon her mother; the baby would be fretful. Already the village boys were returning with the cattle which every pleasant morning were driven into the grassy hills for pasture. The boys should not run them so fast; the milk would be as good as *churned* by the time each cow was in her own shed. Louanna walked down the hill on the south side, and presently she could see a light in the walnut house: Mary would be cross and Lottie and Alice would be politely reproachful over their mother's absence; she did not care. Her muddy shoes were sandals for skipping on clouds; her tears over the jack-in-the-pulpits were pearls tossed in the sea of poesy; Wing Winfield was a kind grave man who would smile indulgently in the lamplight and say, "Why, of course, my dear. I had not realized that your poetry meant quite so much to you." And what was Professor Cavendish, whom the village had promptly nicknamed *The Dandy* because of his parted beard and fluted umbrella and the inevitable new volume which must have been tucked each morning since his birth, so very carefully under his arm? A friend, surely, a literary friend, and it was for literature that she had blushed so deeply over his finding her in the woods, disheveled from kneeling on the damp soil. She had been fearfully embar-

rassed, almost to fainting, in fact, and that must be a lesson to her never to venture forth without her camphor bottle: a lady was never entirely safe without one. She would remember after this. And of course it was wrong to even suspicion that the light in Professor Cavendish's eyes had been kindled by other than the Elizabethans, if he *had* quoted Shelley who was a Romantic, an impetuous youth more than fifty years dead . . . *'Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is. . . .'*

"Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!"

(Professor Cavendish could not very well have repeated *that* before a lady!)

"And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

Unextinguished Hearth! So she would entitle her volume! And let its dedication be *To a Friend,* since a wife and mother could not in any virtue suffer her work to bear a gentleman's name, however helpful his encourage-

ment. What *was* his first name, anyway,—or had he been born Professor Cavendish, already made with a book and a portfolio and gleaming degrees with glued-on twinkling stars, stamped with the seals of Eastern universities?

"Where were you, Mamma?" Lottie said, running down the steps, her shoes buttoned wrong, her forehead in a frown: "Mamma, where *were* you?"

"So far away, my precious, my pet," Louanna said, kissing her, "I doubt that you will ever know—not for years, at the shortest. But Mamma is so happy. . . . Has Amy been good? Has Papa come home?"

"Mary gave Amy a biscuit," Lottie said. "And Papa hasn't gotten home yet." Her lip trembled. "But the sun was all the way down, and you still were gone."

"Well, I am here now," Louanna said, and she caught the child's hand and they latched the gate and ran up the path and into the house together. "Alice! Amy! Here is Mamma! Where are Mamma's darling girls?"

9

THE LITTLE girls could not go to school because of Mamma's disgrace, and Papa had not left for the bank at the regular time but had waited until there would not be

so many people on the street, loitering two or three or four together, watching to see how he was taking it. About eleven he started out, his face very white and grim, his cane beating impatiently against the boards, where there were sidewalks, or digging bitterly into the earth where there was only a path. From behind the locked door of Mamma's room every little while there came the sound of Amy crying, and then in a minute she would laugh or call out but the crying sound went on exactly the same, and even the wind all around the house kept crying and crying and Mary cried in the kitchen until the little girls could bear it no longer and started weeping into each other's aprons as if they had not long ago decided that it was impossible to cry any more: all the sounds of weeping had already been made so many times that their breasts, their throats, could no longer let them go, and all the tears that were in their bodies had been shed and shed again until their whole selves were a new substance of strange brittle dryness. The mulberry tree groaned under Mamma's window, and the elms and maples along the front walk bent their branches lower and lower like figures lost in grief. In the night a slow dark rain had wept long desperate tears on the roof, and in the morning the petals were dashed off the Easter lilies and crocuses and daffodils. Spring was barely there, but its beauty had vanished. Now there would be no walking in the woods on the hillside behind the college buildings, as the other eve-

ning Mamma had said they should go when the jack-in-the-pulpits bloomed, and she had counted the days—perhaps by a week from Wednesday, and this was only Monday. All the flowers of the earth were dead because Mamma had said she wanted to die; all the loveliness of April was buried, because this had happened in April: they had heard it themselves, sitting in their pew in church where Grandfather Winfield had sat so long ago that nowhere in Papa's memory was there the faintest suggestion of what he had looked like. Mamma was there, with Amy on her lap, and Papa with his father's hymnal, and the minister's words had made them all jump with surprise so that Amy began to cry and Mamma said *"Sh, ssh,"* like she always did, not knowing she said it, not knowing her lips did anything, nor that her purple hat tipped over one eye from Amy's squirming.

Aunt Rebecca had come later on and cried in the parlor and had said the minister should not have *dared,* as prominent as Papa was and after all that Grandfather Winfield had done for the town and college, but Papa said that the minister's business was the annihilation of sin wherever he found it, and that Aunt Rebecca could not see Mamma and would she please leave at once and stop making a scene before the children? And Aunt Rebecca said she would go, and she did, off across the campus of the Female Seminary, with the curtains twitching twice as much as when the young gentlemen sang songs on the

steps. The sun had gone and Aunt Rebecca wrapped her shawl up around her head, walking in the twilight, and she looked like an old woman hurrying past the pump and before the windows where the curtains twitched and up the hill toward home. She had said she did not believe what the minister said about Mamma, but of course it was true because the minister had said so and it was all the more true because the two young men who had seen Mamma with Professor Cavendish were ministerial students, so of course they would not lie about how long she had stood with her hand in his and how reluctant she had seemed to leave him sitting there on the stump. Oh, without doubt it was Mamma, even if the minister had not actually mentioned her name, for the whole village knew it was and Papa knew it was, and Mary had drawn the blinds in the sitting room and parlor so that the house was dark like a house where death was. The minister had said nobody knew how grieved he was to feel it his duty to chasten with rebuke, but when he came on Sunday afternoon Mamma refused to see him: she kept her door locked and would not so much as let Papa in until the minister had gone.

From the hall one could hear every word that Papa said, whether or not one wanted to, whether or not one clapped one's hands tight over one's two ears. He was crossest, it appeared, because Mamma's shoes and gloves were covered with dirt and her dress was mussed, and because she

kept asking him over and over if he would not please try to understand. She said it was a pretty day and she had been feeling downhearted and she had gone to see if the jack-in-the-pulpits were in bloom, and that Professor Cavendish was taking a stroll and that it was only natural for them to talk awhile about poetry because they both loved it so. And Papa said *Poetry, poetry* in a big loud voice, Poetry, poetry, as if he hated it, and when he came downstairs again he had broken into the desk and thrown Mamma's ledger into the fire and scowled so sternly at the little girls that they had somehow forced the tears to stay in their eyes when the corners of the pages curled so white and helpless before the cruel crimson flame. Those were the pages Mamma had struggled over, her pencil hovering, descending, making precise little letters which grew to be words and phrases and lines and finally almost a ledgerful; she had shown Alice and Lottie after supper, the evening she was so happy: "See, children?" she had said; "Mamma's poems!—almost a book of them! You shall be proud of Mamma. . . ." And even then the village was talking, because the students had been quite close, behind some bushes, and they had told everybody they met and the people they told had told other people and so in a little while the whole village knew. All but Mamma and Papa, who went on doing everything the same as usual, and went to church on Sunday, standing up

and singing the Doxology in clear sure tones, because they had sung it so often:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow. . . ."

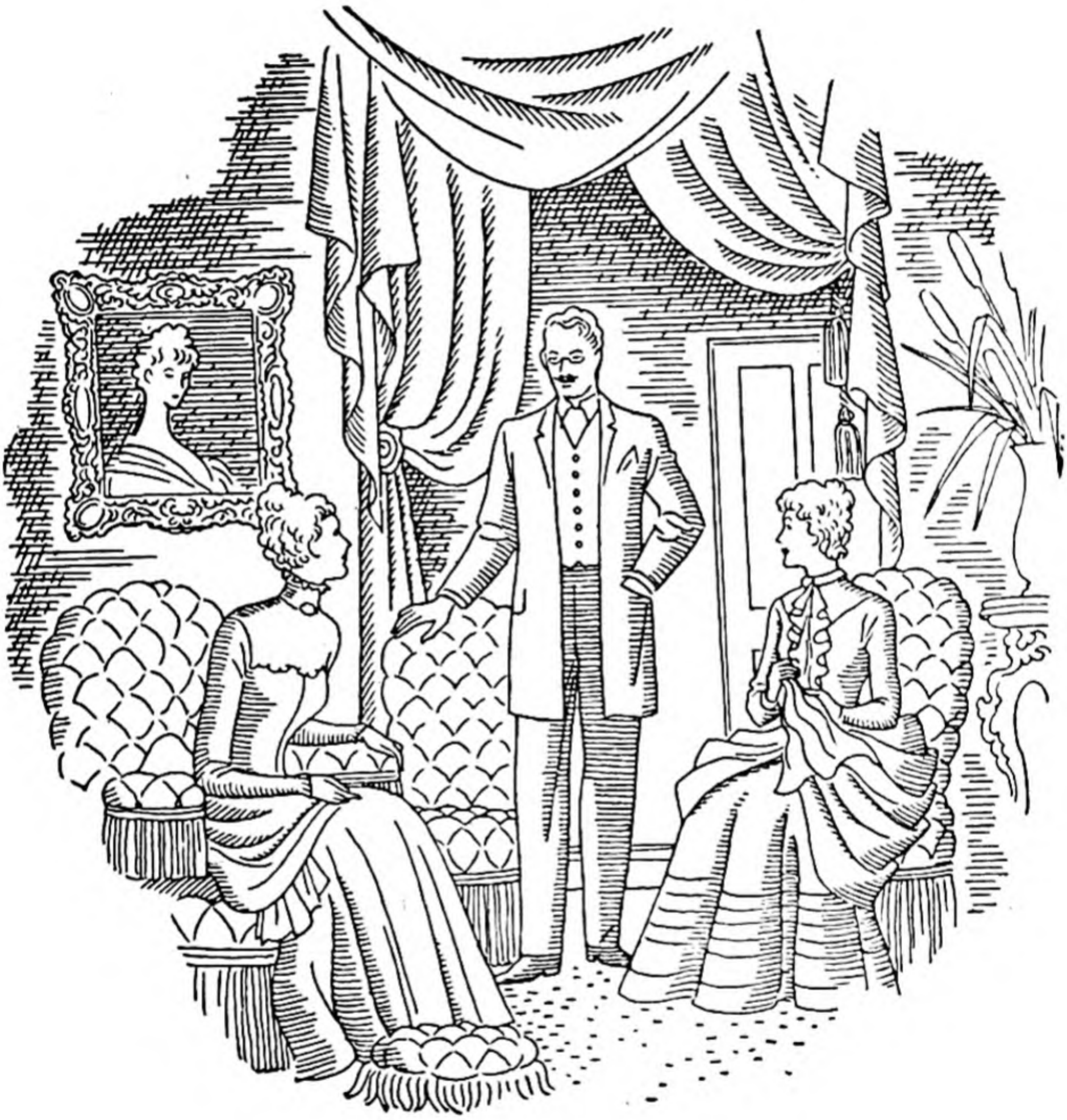
Church was the most peaceful place on Sunday mornings! In summer especially, with the windows open and the heat hanging like a thick smothery curtain between one's eyes and the ceiling. In the corners the jacky-daubers had built their nests of ridged grey plaster, and in the quiet of the sermon or prayer might be expected to begin flying around with a slow monotonous drone, so that it was extremely hard to think about what the minister was saying, or even to sit still, when one never knew at just what moment the insects would decide to dip down under the pews (where some of their houses were, because the sexton had a weak back and never dusted the under sides of the seats).

But this was April. Jacky-daubers would come in a month or so and the dogwood flowers would change to apple and cherry, and daffodils to roses and touch-me-nots and saxifrage and Queen Anne's lace, and at last, goldenrod. One hated to think of that. One hated to think of anything, now that Mamma's disgrace had altered the world as completely as from summer to winter. In Mamma's bedroom Amy cried—or was it Amy?—and outside the house

the wind cried harder than ever. A student rapped on the door with the message that Grandmamma Wainwright was ill; could Mamma come? And Mary said *no,* she could *not,* right away like she had already asked Mamma instead of not seeing her a minute the entire morning.

All day long the little girls moved through the darkened rooms, trying to read, trying to work on their quilt-blocks, trying to play paper dolls, but there was no use trying. Their hearts pounded under the square yokes of their everyday aprons. Poor Mamma, poor Papa, their hearts cried out of the small shrouded silence between beats. "Poor children," Mary said, calling them to the kitchen for mush and bonny clabber and fresh bread and jelly. The mush was too hot and the clabber too cold and the bread crust too hard: Lottie cried again. The April which had been so warm and beautiful was lost by dusk in a cold thick blankness of gusty rain. There was no telling where the robins were or the frail young butterflies or the pale reeling honeybees or the shy black-nosed lambs which had wobbled with the ewes over the rocky fields this last week or two. Nothing was safe any more; nothing was certain. April was gone and Mamma was gone, not in the fact but in a less definable sense: tomorrow they would be here and a year from now they would be here, the same, yet mysteriously different. They would be strangers to their new identities.

BOOK FOUR



LOTTIE was making a Princess lampshade, in accordance with directions in the July *Delineator*. She had already completed a match-scratcher resembling a drum: the ends were red plush studded with gold-headed pins—the effect was really charming; everybody who saw it told her so. Now if she only had a few sea shells, two large and several small ones, she could follow the directions for making a shell pin-cushion and receptacle, just over the page from the lampshade. She believed she could do it in a few minutes: all it required was sawdust and glue and an oval of velvet, besides the shells. During the spring and summer she had contrived more than a dozen photograph frames, beautiful silk ones with hand-painted wreaths or floral sprays for decoration. The prettiest ones had cut-out spaces for three pictures: Lottie had meant to finish it for Amy's twenty-first birthday, but just at that time they were all terribly busy over the boarders. They had not wanted to take boarders: somehow boarders in the walnut house seemed almost a desecration, but Alice pointed out that students were not quite the same as ordi-

nary boarders: the nicest people in the village took students from time to time—when children grew up and married and went off to homes of their own, or when old people died and their empty rooms might just as well be put to some good use. After all, it was doing the university a favor: young men had to be housed and fed somewhere, and with the college growing as it was, not even the fine new buildings could shelter all of them. Anyway, Papa had insisted. In times of panic, he said, people could not afford to be choicy. So Amy and Lottie moved into Alice's room where they were so crowded they could scarcely lace their corsets without bumping one another, and the house was suddenly full of strange young men with books and papers and even glass jars containing the ingredients for scientific experiments. Their music folders were tossed untidily upon the piano, and one horrible evening Wing Winfield came home to find a hat jauntily perched upon the head of the naked girl candleholder his father had brought from the East. Worse than that, a waistcoat had been wrapped around her slender figure and a cravat tied about her throat. As for emptying the students' slops, Alice and Lottie did that by wordless agreement: Amy was too young; such tasks were not for her.

Grandfather Winfield's name was still over the door of the bank, and Papa still went there every morning, sometimes to serve his neighbors through the grated window he had had installed after the big robbery at the county

seat, sometimes simply to sit before the Franklin stove, his face growing redder and redder from the glow of the coals. Old Trask was no longer there: nobody was there but Papa. Since the electric railroad had been operating between the village and the county seat, most of the village chose to transact its business at the large bank which faced the courthouse. But even the strongest banks, in great cities like Cleveland and Columbus and Cincinnati were in trouble enough, with times so hard. Right while she bent the wires for the frame of the Princess lampshade, Lottie's fingers trembled at the memory of Old Trask, so white and cold on the floor of the bank one bright May morning. Poor Old Trask, who looked vaguely ridiculous anywhere in the world but on his high worn stool.

Papa had changed too, Lottie thought, thinking at the same time how handsome the lampshade would look on the little round table in the parlor—if only she had a lampstand fancy enough to do it credit! Her fingers were so busy with the lace frill which had to be stretched over the frame just so, that her mind could not actually concern itself with Papa. He had changed, that was all. Or he had not changed, but was only the way he had always been, except more so—oh, much more and most definitely like himself, solemn and cross and unrelenting.

But they must not blame him: business was bad and he had suffered a great many troubles. Better not think about

Papa; better think of the lampshade and of the pincushion she was going to make if she could get the sea shells, and about her pretty "Fedora" gloves in the drawer upstairs. She had got them as a premium from the *Monthly Illustrated American,* with the names of five new subscribers and fifteen cents postage. She had received an earlier premium too, for the names of ten subscribers and fifty cents postage—how she had pored over the picture of it and the printed description:

> "Neat and stylish black satin parasol, trimmed with a flounce of Chantilly lace, satin bows, fine selected Vienna carved handles."

She would rather have had the sunshade depicted beside it:

> "China silk, entirely covered with shirred dotted net; neat selected English stick; can be had in white, brown, blue or pink."

But it came only in a misses' size; she was afraid it would appear too small and therefore giddy. And surely the black satin one was elegant enough, really a trifle too elegant for the village. All spring she had cherished the hope that she would have a chance to travel to the Columbian Exposition and carry it there. She had known all

along that she could not go, but it was fun to plan and imagine, pretending to herself that she was truly going. Amy had cried over having to stay home, but Amy was the kind to cry over everything. If the kitten died or the bread would not rise or the Dominique hen came off the nest too soon, chilling the eggs beyond the faintest possibility of fuzzy dark chicks, *too* cute among the lighter Leghorns.

At any rate, the boarders would not be back now, though the fall term was opening next Monday. The episode of the statue had been too much for Papa, and there was Amy to think about: he could not afford to have the young fools casting sheep's eyes at her. Or so he said; Lottie had barely noticed. When the students were there, nobody had time for anything, not even Amy, whom she and Alice spared wherever they could for she would always be "the baby" to them, if she lived to be a hundred. Besides, the boarders were not content at being merely that; they wanted to organize and make a club of it, an eating club with a name over the door, like *All Good Chaps* or *Ye Banquet Hall* or *Jolly Dozen.* One club was called *Scotch Heaven* and every fall a banner streamed from its second-story windows, flaunting the words of Burns' blessing:

"Some hae meat and canna eat,
And some would eat that want it;

But we hae meat, and we can eat,
Sae let the Lord be thankit."

The village said that was sacrilegious, but it ought to know there was never any telling what college boys would be up to. Not that their pranks were ever very *bad:* it was merely the uncertainty of what they might do next. After fifty years the village still had no way of guessing. With each September the whole familiar story began over again: life, laughter, singing and cavorting, where all through a long dreary June, July and August there had been nothing but silence, and heat hanging in yellow waves that swayed like the very gesture of expectation. The middle of September!—and here it was again, after an incredibly bleak summer, but this summer had been cool and dark, with sudden cloudbursts of rain in swift silvery sheets. Of course *this* summer would have to be rainy, when every other summer could be blazing with sunshine. This summer must start off with the worst storm in the history of the village, breaking the mulberry tree with a snap and a crash, so that it lay on the grass in the morning with death written like a word on every ruined leaf of it, just as they had been counting on those leaves to nourish the silkworms sleeping small and hidden in the eggs which were that moment on their way from Washington—*government* silkworms which must surely make their fortune far more swiftly than toiling over the hot

cookstove, or groping under the wide beds morning after morning. *Why* must the students alway push them so far back?—*splash, splash*—but of course there was no way of even hinting that they be less careless; it simply had to be borne along with a thousand other humiliations, with sorrow and shabbiness and the never-to-be-mentioned shadow of Mamma's accepted sin.

This June, for once, Alice and Lottie had been glad to see college close. The silkworm eggs had hatched, and who would believe that the product of only two ounces of eggs should require such ceaseless care. Surely if the young gentlemen had remained another week they should have had to go hungry, the appetite of the worms was so ravenous that even with neighbor children helping Amy pick leaves for them they never got enough, but went crawling out of their trays and all over the room in their desperate hunger: or was it hunger? Could it be possible, for worms to be spitefully contrary? The report of the Secretary of Agriculture had made the whole venture sound so easy, and thirty dollars seemed such a lot in return for putting a mere ounce of tiny eggs to hatch, and feeding leaves to the worms which should come from them, and finally shipping off the triumphant harvest of cocoons; eighty pounds to the ounce, the bulletin said, or maybe more, and fresh cocoons were selling for thirty-five cents a pound.

Besides, such labor was patriotic. It was incredible that

a wide fertile nation like the United States must depend for its silk upon a small distant island like Japan, or upon far-off countries like Italy and France, whose women were certainly no more capable of raising silk than the women of any other country, given proper instruction and opportunity.

So Lottie had written the letter, and Alice had brought the eggs from the post office, a strange substance in a strange-shaped container, and the kitchen seethed with a quality of excitement alien to any dream of Josiah Winfield's, however broad those dreams as he watched the walnut timbers slung into place and the mallet making them secure.

"Let me see!" Amy said. "Well, I never! And do you really expect to make money out of those things? I never heard the like!"

"The house is so big," Alice said, "that it seems as if we should be able to earn money in it, some way or other. But the students are always so hungry, however much we prepare. . . ."

"The pigs!" Lottie said. "That Neddie Peters guzzled three pieces of pie! *Big* pieces! But thank goodness, it won't cost anything to feed silkworms. Just pick a few leaves and that is all there is to it."

"If we had the leaves," Alice said. "But now the mulberry tree is gone, it will be different. The directions say osage will do. We shall have to get them."

"Well, there is osage around half the farms outside the village," Lottie said. "We can just go and bring home a basketful of leaves. That ought to last them a long time, as little as those eggs are."

"They haven't hatched yet," Amy said. "They can't very well eat yet, can they?"

"Oh, hush, Amy," Alice said.

"The mulberry tree was so handy," Lottie said, "that was half the reason for applying for the eggs. Osage hedges are full of thorns, and right now I can't think of one closer than a mile from here. South of the mill pond, I guess. But that is a long way, and the sun will be scorching, with summer coming on."

They had stretched cheesecloth on frames to make trays for the worms. They had to set the frames in their bedroom, because there was no other place. Papa's big room was out of the question, and the students slept everywhere else. The ell chamber was crowded with furniture and old clothing and boxes and barrels and dust. Above it all, Grandmother Winfield's great loom thrust out a beam or two, gaunt and bare, like a tall grey gibbet. The kitchen porch was open to the birds, so that was out of the question, and they washed in the woodshed, besides having to keep the wood there. The barn had the least space of all: in the loft, the hay and the cutter; downstairs, the surrey and tilbury and the new green Studebaker wagon which Papa used for trips to the farm. In the stable were the

horses, Dexter and Baldy and Pet. The nervous mare in the boxstall was called "the sorrel." She never had any other name.

So the silkworms must share the girls' bedroom. Lottie was cross because her easel had to be carried out to make space for them; she had halfway completed a scene called *Calm after Storm*. There was the wreckage of a ship, with the body of a fair young girl floating on a spar. Or Lottie meant it for a spar. The moon had risen and the sea was quiet as the mill pond. Amy said there should be more evidence of storm about; the title meant nothing at all; the ship could every bit as well have *hit* something. So there it was, unfinished, with a tear-blotch here and there on the canvas. Lottie dreamed of being a famous painter, and surely the violets on the photograph frames looked as real and lovely as the dewiest blossoms from the ravine at the foot of Old Posey Pot. But Papa would not let her take instruction at the Seminary or even of a private teacher. His face turned purple-red at the least mention of any art for women; that was because of Mamma, and the girls knew better than to suggest painting or composition, music, or even fancy sewing. Lottie was clever with her hands, and by herself had mastered the intricate whirls and curls of Spencerian penmanship; she had been asked to write in every album in the village because of the incomparable scrollwork and felicitous doves with which she embellished her sentiments. If it were proper for nice

girls to be seen in places of business, she might have helped her father at the bank, for she could make neat, regular, plain figures, entirely guiltless of the shading and flourishes which adorned her less practical inscriptions. But she never let him see any of her work: it was wiser not to; besides, he could make as many figures as were needed in times like these. Indeed, Old Trask had added and subtracted all of the really necessary ones before he drained the bottle of "medicine" he had bought to "finish some rats with."

2

NOTHING HAD ever been as horrible as the silkworms! Not any monsters of history had grown so fast or been so greedy; nothing had ever left such a smell or so stubborn a stain. No creatures had *ever* so persistently refused to remain where they belonged!—up the dark polished posts of the bed they crept, up the clean ruffles of the curtains and onto the valances, across the window glass and over the sills, on chairs, carpets and bureau, floor, pictures and bric-a-brac. Even on Alice's false hair, spinning grey strands through it, binding it tight to the mirror-frame from which it dangled.

"Amy!" Lottie said. "Quick, shut that door! They'll get into Papa's room!"

"I don't care!" Amy said. "I'm too tired, dragging that basket all the way from Uptons' pasture. I don't care if they *never* get another bite to eat, the mean, ugly things! I don't care if they starve to death!"

"Why, Amy!" Alice said.

"We stand to make fifty or sixty dollars," Lottie said. "See, they are spinning like mad! You don't seem to realize that is *silk* they are making there. You seem to forget that is what we shall be paid for!"

"Well," Amy said, "it ought to go onto the cocoons then, instead of on my Japanese hairpin-holder. I don't intend to send *that* to Washington, however much silk is spun around it."

"It does seem as if they ought to stay in the trays a little better," Alice said. "There must be something the matter with them. They don't act at all like the ones in the bulletin. And Amy is right: *look* where they have been spinning! Across the neck of my Henrietta cape!—I shan't send that to Washington, either. And look, oh look, Lottie, they've left a stain on your best corset cover! Right on the insertion! The horrid, horrid things!"

"Maybe it will bleach," Lottie said, trying to think of the sixty dollars, or even more, if the cocoons were of extra size and quality. But they seemed so inferior, much smaller and less shapely than the ones in the bulletin's

photographs. She tried not to think of their capacity for osage leaves. Only that morning Mr. Upton had asked Amy to please not pick any more from his hedge; he was afraid the trees were dying. And actually they had been stripped as far up as Amy and the Morton children could reach (and the young Mortons had to be paid with cookies, so there was scant profit in *that* direction!).

"It takes sixteen hundred pounds of leaves," Amy said, "to feed the worms that hatch out of one ounce of eggs. I read it in the bulletin."

"And we had two ounces," Alice said.

"Some did not hatch," Lottie said, "but that means thirty-two hundred pounds of leaves, at that rate. Surely, that cannot be right."

"Yes, it is," Amy said. "I've carried them."

"Oh dear," Alice said. "And we need money so badly. I ask you, did you ever see anything shabbier than these shoes? I can't go to church Sunday."

"Better tell Papa you are ill, then," Lottie said. "You know how he hates the slightest suggestion that we haven't enough money. You know how proud he is."

"I wish I could afford a pair of Sloma kid Oxfords," Amy said. "I think they are the handsomest! Though my patent-leather boots are still pretty. I like boots buttoned in scallops."

"Oh, well," Lottie said, "we shall do well to have a new basque apiece for autumn. Though Papa does say

that the tide has turned. He believes times will be better later on."

They planned to divide the sixty dollars, unless it were really their duty to hand it over to their father who was in debt from the effort of keeping the bank alive over a difficult period. They felt that they should give it all to him, but in her heart each one kept planning to the last precious penny what she would do with her share. They all needed clothes, and Alice's choice was a terra-cotta crépon with black cord garniture. She had marked the model in a fashion magazine; the pattern cost only one shilling, three pence, and appeared quite simple to make up, in spite of the advanced fashion it represented. Lottie most desired a full street toilette of coachman's-drab; it would be sensible, she thought, for general wear, yet stylish enough for best. Amy wanted changeable silk with the biggest leg-o'-mutton sleeves in the county. Sixty dollars divided by three!—but of course it was possible that the ravenous worms would reveal their gratitude for the bushels of osage leaves the sisters had carried up the long stairs and spread on the trays like feasts before ten thousand spinning, squirming Belshazzars. There might be *more* than sixty dollars' worth: several ladies had written in to the *household hints* departments of various magazines, telling of their own experiences with silk culture. Some of them were most encouraging: one farmer's wife in Kansas had realized one hundred dollars from three

ounces of eggs. Alice and Lottie sighed at thought of it, but Amy said she did not believe a single word: the lady was simply trying to show off on paper, she just bet she was, and for all they knew, this far away, her silkworms had acted as spiteful and stubborn and unobliging as the ones upstairs, or crawled off their trays and out all over the state of Kansas!

The worst of anything was thinking ahead to the time when the cocoons must be plunged into boiling water and "stifled" according to directions. Alice said she could not do it, no matter what; it was the same as killing somebody in cold blood; she positively could not even be in the house when it had to be done.

Lottie's heart was too tender too. She would as soon go without her share of the money, though she needed a new street toilette dreadfully. Her sisters need not hope to depend on her. The very idea was too terrible to keep in the mind. They must somehow manage the fearful deed without her.

"You needn't think I intend to do it all by myself," Amy said. "I've done the biggest part of fetching and carrying for the creatures: my job is over! Look at the times I've been drenched to the skin, and look at the freckles I've got, standing in the sun picking osage leaves till I could drop from faintness. My arms over my head, and the hedge so thick and close! Not me! No, thank you!"

The time was not yet there, but it was coming. Day after day the cocoons were more numerous. If a book were laid down in the bedroom a cocoon was promptly spun upon it. With her birthday dollar Amy purchased a bottle of *Cecilian Bloom of Lilies,* her freckles were so distressing, and by morning it was firmly spun to the bureau-shelf. She tried to pull the cork out, but her fingers were at once entwined with barely visible threads. "I can't stand it!" she said. "I shall go sleep in the haymow until this siege is over! How much longer does it have to go on, Lottie?"

The last ten days were the hardest; they seemed longer than eternity, and as relentless. They learned that the worms were hungriest the few days just before the spinning. They learned that picking osage leaves was the most tedious occupation in the world. The sun turned back to rain, and they gathered the leaves with showers plastering their bangs to their foreheads, but the worms must be fed, no matter what. Then there were dark chilly days in which the grass failed to dry; the leaves were as wet as the grass, soaking their sleeves as they reached upward among the thorny branches.

They read every word they could find about silk culture, just as they had read about it all winter, looking forward to spring when the eggs should be sent them. Their conversation was in terms of the trade: reeled silk, cocoons,

waste, domestic consumption, bounties, tariff, import, supply and demand.

They agreed with the Department of Agriculture that it was entirely possible to introduce silk culture into the United States with ultimate profit. There was no reason why it should not be done: mulberry trees would grow in this as well as other temperate climates. They grieved for the old mulberry tree which had stood in the side yard ever since they could remember, but its sparse foliage would never have been enough for the starving horde in the disordered bedroom. They kept the door locked, lest their father be disturbed. They found a worm in the hall and were stricken with despair. "I don't know what we shall do," Alice said. But with a third of sixty dollars, even after buying the terra-cotta crépon, there should be enough left for the purchase of a genuine Jackson corset waist: nothing was as comfortable or as easy to fit a dress over; she had been wanting one for a long time and now she meant to have it. And there were the shoes she needed, and certainly a hat, for she had rewired the old one three seasons in a row and another was too much to expect of it—oh dear!

Lottie thought if they ever got rid of the worms so she could get to her painting again she would be completely happy. Even if Amy made fun of her ocean, saying it was too peaceful—when it *had* to be peaceful! When *calm* after *storm* was exactly what she was endeavoring

to depict! If the sea were not quiet, the point was lost entirely. It was the idea of contrast between the wrecked vessel, suggestive of damage already done, and the tranquil water now that the elements had subsided, which *made* the whole thing! But Amy could hardly be expected to understand. She lacked the creative impulse. To cap the climax she had called the spar a raft! A raft, indeed! Lottie was not ashamed of the tears she had wept in utter vexation and sick grief. One had a right to weep when one was irrevocably, bitterly, misunderstood.

As for Amy, since the clouds had hidden the sun and saved her complexion (with the assistance of the *Bloom of Lilies*), she had only to decide between a changeable silk of red and blue or one that shimmered from blue to golden. It scarcely mattered which. And she might do something about her hair when she went out for the first time with the new dress on: perhaps arrange it a trifle higher, though for a young lady her age the Empire knot was supposed to be the most tasteful style; she had a thin face and must wear her side locks curled. Perhaps, after all, the high coiffure would be unbecoming. Once she had tried the Catogan braid, but that made her look like Lottie. She somehow would rather not resemble her sisters too closely. They were so much older, for one reason, and for another, it was pleasant to hear strangers say: "Oh, are you her sister? Well, I never should have imagined it!" In a tone that turned the entire compliment one way.

If Mary were only here, Alice thought helplessly, she would not mind doing that *stifling* job. . . . But there was no use standing there wishing for somebody who was gone forever. She might wish on indefinitely, building herself a happiness that was vivid and alive, something more than a weekly round of washing and ironing and baking, and cleaning the upstairs, then the downstairs, then baking again, then her Sunday school class and morning and evening worship, then wash-day again, over and over, forever and ever.

No, Mary would not have suffered tremors of the conscience or of anywhere else, over the idea of thrusting the cocoons into hot water. Mary could kill a hen or a snake as an ungarnished matter of course. The thing had to be done and that was all there was to it. The sisters missed Mary sometimes more than they missed their mother, though their dresses had never been as pretty after Louanna was gone. There had been fewer ruffles on their drawers and practically no tucks in their petticoats, until they grew up and learned to sew for themselves and Wing Winfield bought a new treadle for the Wheeler & Wilson, which had been broken by Amy's riding upon it, trying to amuse herself while everybody was busy in the master's bedroom: Wing Winfield had another son; the neighbors and the doctor hurried in and out. Rebecca Wainwright sat on one side of the bed and Wing Winfield on the other. Nobody noticed what Amy did.

The first snow of that winter lay thick and soft on the ground. Alice and Lottie remembered, because they were quite young ladies by then, taller than their mother. And they remembered how heavily she had moved through the rooms, her face puffed and pale above the round collar of her cashmere wrapper. Something is wrong, something is desperately wrong, their hearts quavered, although of course they were not supposed to know that Louanna was expecting a baby. Here was a burden more than of the body; here was a grief more bitter than the heart's. At the table Wing Winfield glared into his coffee cup: Louanna answered *yes* and *no* but her voice was far-off, like the voice of the wind that is lost in the night, beyond the windows, nearer than the sky, within the treetops, yet not in the treetops. The infant brother's voice was like that too; an echo not of earth, not of joy, but strangely sweet and uncertain and frail, like small thin notes of music.

The cocoons must be dipped! There was nothing to do but steel their minds to the act, considering their hands as grim implements to necessity, making believe that they were not part of themselves, as doctors and nurses and (dire, fearful thought!) undertakers must often have to resign themselves to odious, awful tasks.

They followed the directions as carefully as they could, arranging their harvest in a clean strong box, sending it off with qualms and thanksgiving. But many of the cocoons had been lost, spun as they were to furnishings

from which they could not be torn without disaster. And unquestionably the worms had been ill; the essence of their affliction permeated the bedroom; its vile yellow evidence lingered alike on quilt and counterpane, the padded cover of Lottie's album, and Louanna's knitted bedroom shoes that Alice was wearing out, as much as she hated to, but her feet were cold even in the summer: last winter she had been sick a month with what the doctor said must be the new *la grippe.*

It was incredible that there should be so few cocoons, after all those baskets of leaves; or such little ones, when the room had overflowed with worms as the creek ran over from January thaws, out and out and out until only the hilltops offered any refuge from it.

They hurried to the post office twice a day, as often as the mail came in. They waited and waited, but the letter was so long coming that they partly forgot it; then the postmaster thrust it between the bars of his window the first thing one Saturday morning. Lottie's hand trembled so she could hardly accept it. Her knees shook so she thought she would never get home.

Five dollars and twelve cents! Not enough to present to Papa; a difficult sum to divide by three! Lottie went back to her picture frames then, and to match-scratchers and pin receptacles and the summer's supply of fly brushes—long slender sticks with fluffs of blue and white shredded tissue paper. Somebody had knocked a chair over against

Calm after Storm. The canvas was torn beyond repair.

Alice took to walking in the yard after supper. The moon came up across the round soft shoulder of a hill, and suddenly she felt smothered as if by a thick warm cloud. It had a color like new bricks—terra-cotta, the color of the dress she wanted! She went into the house and asked Amy to bring her the smelling-salts—they ought to be on the sideboard.

Amy committed a deliberate disobedience which would have killed Papa if he had found out. She made an engagement with a young man who followed her part way home from prayer meeting. It was for the next night, on top of Sugar Lump. When she got home the house was dark, so she climbed in the buttery window. Now the students were gone and the silkworms were gone and she slept in her own room again, she managed to undress and get into bed without waking anyone.

3

THE WALNUT house had been lived in so long that it must have stood there always with the row of drooping elms and wide-spreading maples in front of it and the clematis over the gate-arch and creeper climbing up from the well-

shed, onto the eaves and over the east gable, higher and higher until a thin curling arm reached out and caught the Rambo tree and blossomed within it, gayer, more reckless, than its proper flower or fruit.

The college had stood upon the hill for such a long time that it too must have been there forever, one with the ridges and the valley as they spun from the glacier's fury of rock and snow. Now, though there were other hills, the one upon which the college stood assumed special significance because of it: it was "the hill;" the rest were vaguely less, though every inch as tall.

The village had grown slowly, as if there were no hurry whatever. Not even the electric railroad had meant any rush of building or expanding. People got about more in these days, to be sure, but growth was different. It required a particular sort of energy which perhaps the village would never have.

The mere excitement of the electric railroad was enough, with extra excursions being run out from the county seat every so often, and strange people walking about the village, climbing the hill for the view, peeping into Winfield Hall and the library and the Science building, and finally descending to sit under the elms on the Presbyterian lawn where ice cream and cake were served and flies shooed, and parasols raised in the shade so that a lady and gentleman could enjoy their tête-à-tête in private.

Then there were bicycle clubs, surging in and out of the village in a billow of dust—twenty or thirty riders at once, pedalling like mad. Even the professors took up the craze: the history professor purchased a tandem and rode with his wife, their baby in a basket on the handlebars. A few brazen young women appeared in bloomers: they came over from the county seat; the village girls had more respect for themselves. Divided skirts were advocated, but considered with suspicion. At the county fair there were ladies' bicycle races on a saucer-shaped track enclosed by a high board fence. Only the ruder, more roistering class of men paid to see them perform, but if one just happened to be near at certain hours the contestants might be seen going in or out, wrapped in blankets, for all the world like race horses or wrestling performers, their trainers beside them. They were called "bloomer girls" and were presumed to be not only fast but wicked. Poor wretches! Their health was bound to be shattered, if no worse fate befell them. For certainly no woman could long survive the arduous effort of pedalling around and around a track at breakneck speed, her form bent over the bars of her mount in exactly the posture of a hardened young scorcher of the opposite sex, his muscles toughened by manly exercise.

Nice men never went in, but it was respectable to peep through knotholes. Even if one had to fight to protect his point of vantage. Even if one had to invent an excuse

for leaving the lady he had escorted to the fairgrounds. And be gone an hour or more that she could never question.

The Winfield girls had attended last year's fair because their father served on the fair board and was given passes for his family. But before he permitted them to go they had to promise not to speak a word to any man: they *ought* to be old enough to know right from wrong, but their mother had been thirty-three. . . .

They stayed at home so much and with one another so constantly that they were bashful and afraid once they were outside of the yard with the gate latched behind them. And the county seat was a city: one never could trust a city man—there were any number of bold reckless-looking ones strolling about the fairgrounds, casting glances this way and that, doubtless intending to catch the eye of some innocent girl and lure her into goodness knew how fearful a mode of existence. Such men wore loud cravats and cutaway coats, and thick gold chains across their stomachs. Their fingers toyed with the tips of their mustaches; their dark eyes rolled incessantly.

"Amy, Amy! Come on!" Lottie said, grasping her sister by the elbow. For Amy was so pretty and fresh the villains would single her out at once; she must not be allowed alone one second in the whole long dangerous day.

The sisters walked timidly from one sideshow tent to another, never going in, just standing and watching. In

front of one of them a crowd was waiting, and finally out came a girl clad in *tights* and a huge black hat and a tiny frill of skirt that barely reached from her infinitesimal waist to her shapely thighs which it not even pretended to cover! She mounted a platform and began to sing:

"Where did you get that hat,
That collar and that tie?
Where did you get those *sus*-pen-ders
That hold your pants so high?"

The circle of men guffawed as she glanced archly in their direction. Alice and Lottie turned ill with fright and mortification. They dragged Amy away, beyond the crowd and into the shade of a grove of maples. They wiped their eyes and fanned themselves, and Lottie had to have the back of her collar unhooked a moment so she could get her breath better. Amy kept peering around the trees to make sure nobody should come upon them in such a state of abandon. They brushed the great puffs of one another's sleeves and pushed their hairpins in more firmly. Amy's forehead fringe was a sight; Alice rearranged it. "I do declare," Lottie said, "I haven't felt as embarrassed since that day Lizzie Fremont caught up with me on the street and walked right past the post office with me. I couldn't excuse myself for any errand down a side street—the whole thing was so sudden—and she *would* link her arm

into mine! I nearly died, I was so afraid Papa might glance out the bank window or take a notion to be on the street just then. I still wake up in a cold sweat at night, for fear somebody will tell him."

Her sisters shook their heads with sympathy. Lizzie Fremont was a disreputable person. She had ridden home from the county seat one summer night on the *last car,* on the platform! And the story was going around the village that at the Grocers' picnic the Fourth of July, she had been seen to kick a man's hat off! The Fremonts were one of the village's best families too, or had been. Nobody spoke to Lizzie now, meeting her on the street, except to barely "peck the head" which must be done even to drunkards or chicken-thieves who had been born and reared there.

After a while the girls were able to eat their lunch: sandwiches and mustard pickle, and one of Alice's white cakes; cold coffee in round bottles because coffee in flat bottles looked too suspiciously like something else. Wing Winfield joined them and sat on a bench by the rustic table, a sandwich in his hand, his long legs resting on the heels of his congress gaiters

"Everything all right, girls?" he said. "Having a good time?"

And they agreed *yes, yes,* fearing to tell him about the dreadful men they had seen and the outrageous parody they had heard and the full, painted lips of the girl who

had sung it. In half an hour he rose and disappeared into the crowd again, after telling them where to meet him when it was time to go home: the rig would be hitched near the north gate; he would likely be waiting for them. Now he would be off somewhere with the other men: *Cleveland and Harrison, Cleveland and Harrison.* Had men ever talked about anything else in the world? the girls wondered. Had there been anything under the sun to talk about in the impossibly blank days before Cleveland and Harrison were born?

Presently they found seats together in the gay throng in the grandstand and listened to the band concert that preceded the races. How elegant the band was, with its great shining horns, its rattling drums and wonderful uniforms, red coats with gilt braid. The leader waved his baton and the packed stand tapped its feet with approval:

"Ta-ra-ra-ra *Boom* de-ay,
Ta-ra-ra-ra *Boom* de-ay. . . ."

Amy opened her fan and wished the fat woman on her left would not push so. She saw the red coats and black caps through a haze of commingled feelings. She knew about Mamma and she knew about the tragedy to Papa's friend; she knew how Grandfather Winfield had died on the very threshold of the walnut house, his bride's frantic arms about him. Grief and pain there had been, she real-

ized, and enough to make Papa thoughtful and sad—but what of herself, she wondered; what of being young and pretty and wanting to be happy? Oh surely they ought to know that dusting the parlor could not satisfy the fierce wild longing that clutched at the heart, any more than crocheting tidy after tidy could appease the body that hated so to sit in one place, rocking with the tick of the clock, rising only to put wood on the fire or let Papa's spaniel out—never leaping up with welcome on one's lips and flushes on one's cheeks: never to be waiting for *someone!*

Lottie was six years older than she; Alice was seven. They could not be expected to share her dreams or understand her hopes: dreams and hopes were too long lost behind them. They were already old maids and the village called them old maids: Amy knew. Last Halloween she had heard the neighbor boys talking under the window.

(A fat woman on one side and Alice on the other, hemming life away from her.) There had been an old maid who had taken care of Papa when he was a boy: *she* had drowned herself in the mill pond. There had been other old maids whose stories fell from the village tongues like small, light-winged seed keys from the September maples. And what had become of Aunt Rebecca, that cold unreal morning when all of a sudden she had wakened beside Lottie in the four-poster to the dim meaningless fact that Mamma had stopped moaning? The

world which in the night had been footsteps and wind and whirling snow was silent now; Mamma was silent and the wind was silent. Lottie still slept and Alice lay in a huddle on the couch which had been arranged for her so Aunt Rebecca and the doctor could take turns resting on Alice's bed in the west bedroom, unless they should both need to be with Mamma the whole night long, as they had last night and the night before and the night before that, sitting in the shielded firelight, because even carrying the lamp to the bedside brought the spasms on, oftener and harder.

The roses in the wall paper were twice as pink in the strange white quiet of daybreak. Snow must have fallen all night, just as it had all day yesterday. A sparrow sat in the fluffy ridge of it that hid the window sill.

Out of the silence Aunt Rebecca's voice came, as cold as snow, as calm as the peaceful sky of morning. She was talking to Papa.

"You've killed her," she said. "First you killed her spirit, and now—look!"

Papa's reply was like a groan. There did not seem to be any sense to it. It was not words, nor even syllables. Dexter made a noise like that in the stable the night he had colic and the neighbor men had to come and help Papa drench him.

"You've killed her," Aunt Rebecca said again, in the

same clear voice, as hard as the icicles that hung from the under sides of the wooden eaves troughs.

Amy would not be seven till spring. Her head was still heavy with sleep, yet all the world without it lay like new crystal. From the distance floated the deep regular tones of bobsled bells—cutter bells were lighter, and sang closer together. Then there *really* was snow! Snow to stay on all winter.

Usually it was easy to find people who went wandering off into the snow, however muddled of mind they were or desperate of body. Ice covered the creek and mill pond, so there was no use searching there. Students crashed through the woods, breaking a thousand paths where Rebecca Wainwright would have left only a small crooked one, a hole here and there where her feet blundered through the tufted whiteness, a shallow swath on the surface of the snow between, where she had dragged from one step to another.

The village turned out to join in the search. Every man and boy donned extra mittens and his heaviest woolen socks, and rubbed his boots with fresh tallow. Every lantern in the village dotted the woods that night.

Amy had to rise with the crowd; everybody was cheering. Lottie and Alice waved their handkerchiefs, because the other ladies were doing it. The bandmaster raised his hand for silence and the bandsmen lifted their instru-

ments again. A tall man who was not wearing a uniform stepped to the front of the platform. He removed his hat and held it across his bosom, being careful not to conceal the carnation in his buttonhole.

"*Af-ter the ball is o-ver,*" his voice sobbed, and the clarinets sobbed with him. The woman beside Amy wiped her eyes, then nudged Amy: "Ain't he got the *best* figure?" she said.

There was less room than ever after they sat down again. Amy had a hard time turning her mind back to Rebecca Wainwright, a plump aunt who had known dozens of stories and whose lap was pleasant for little girls to sit upon.

She was gone: that was all there was to it. Amy had heard the door click softly, but she had been afraid to say so. Wing Winfield had not even heard that: she had left the room, he could not say just when. He had sat by the bed, his head in his hands, not seeing, not hearing, not caring. Then, "Rebecca! Rebecca!" he had called, and Amy had pulled on her slippers and bedroom robe and come out into the hall and said, "Good morning, Papa."

Everybody else slept. The little new baby slept. Even death slept in the walnut house.

4

THE FIFTEENTH of September! A million years must have passed since Josiah Winfield had lifted his bride over the doorsill of his new house. But houses are lightly aged by wind and weather. Wing Winfield stood at the gate and gazed up over the roof. One chimney sagged slightly; it must have new bricks as soon as business was better. He appraised the portico: new boards were needed there. Pickets were out of the west fence and the barn floor must have planks and nails. The place was nine months older than himself. He shook his head. Doubtless his person would be the sounder for a repair here, an improvement there. Doc Morrison had persuaded him to have those gold teeth; there was still some work to be done, if times should get better. Fortunately his health was good. One finger was stiff from the runaway ten—no, twelve years ago. And there was the intermittent headache which had come first the day after Rand's fall. Elias Rand. The hilltop was covered with buildings now; much of his father's dream had been realized years ago. The library tower was green from the ivy which encircled it. The vines reached to the roofs of the two old dormitories: he had not been in the upper stories of either of them for more than twenty years.

No, he thought: hail and showers and sleet and sun were less to a house than love and birth and death moving like mortal shapes within it. And years in their flight were less to the college than the griefs and gladness of uncounted young men who must leave as the swallows came and return again as they vanished into the south, across the creek and over Old Posey Pot, which Amy insisted was a silly name for a hill.

Mount Colossus was not woods any more, but a pruned, dignified and gentle eminence with a curved driveway leading to its wide smooth summit where a stately stone house stood, and a tall red barn with a weathervane. Sugar Lump was unkempt and ugly; men quarried for stone on its east slope, and as fast as timber grew up on the other sides it was cut for wood. Wildflowers grew in spring along the path to its north: long ago arbutus had tangled there among them. Boys had torn it out by the roots: arbutus was easy to trip on, and snakes hid in it. Gentian lifted its blue blossoms there in September, and milkweed flaunted its splitting pods above it. The breeze snatched fluffy seed-feathers from them as it had on Wing's parents' wedding day.

To the east, The Crocodile remained a mystery of weeds and briers. Woodlands surrounded it, but it stood out strange and bald above them. On top of it sprawled a fabulous figure, earthen, yet unearthly. The new professor of geology had already expressed his intention of discover-

ing its secret. He would study, he would examine, he would measure, he would dig. Prehistoric mounds were alike his fever and his febrifuge. And he was going to live in the walnut house! He was going to make his home with Wing Winfield and his daughters!

That was why Wing stood with his hand on the latch, remembering that this was the fifteenth of September; considering how ably the building had withstood the years. He thought, too, of how the college had grown—he could never remember fast enough to call it "the university." Now it was to have a professor to teach the students nothing but the nature of rocks and the incredible activities of the earth, the influence of the ages upon those substances and the effect of the atmosphere upon the ages. Once there had been only the president and Professor Wainwright to lead forty young men through the whole complicated maze of knowledge!

Alice is going to complain over the cooking, Wing thought. He raised the latch, entered the yard and hesitated again, on the pretense of straightening the smooth polished stones which outlined the marigold bed. Well, the girls must realize their duty. The boarding-students had created too much hubbub in the house, and how they had looked at Amy! It was *his* duty to protect his daughters. A settled man like the geology professor would be different. He had talked with him a half hour in the bank, where he had called to transact business. The pro-

fessor had complained over the necessity of seeking lodging: he was anxious to settle himself at once; he was disturbed when his work must be interrupted even for a few days of travel. He had no time to look about, and his trunk and boxes of books were that minute being unloaded in the village, with no place to go.

And so it had happened. Wing drew a deep breath, lifted his chest, called the girls loudly as he entered the door, and the telling was over in what time it took to say two dozen words.

"Yes, Papa," Alice said.

"Yes, Papa," Lottie said.

"Shall I move my things in with Lottie?" Amy said.

There was a dizzy moment of peculiar darkness, then Wing Winfield heard his tongue speak from a long distance away:

"Put him in the big room," it said. "I get too cold in there in the wintertime. You girls don't keep the fire up half the time. The professor ought to be able to stand it. I did, a good many winters."

A stranger in Grandmother's walnut bed? An unknown man where Mamma had slept as bride and new young mother? Where the angels had slipped on soundless wings to carry her away?

"Yes, Papa," Alice said.

"Mercy, my doughnuts!" Lottie said, running to the kitchen.

"Kitty wants out," Amy said, turning toward the door.

"I don't see why we have to have another boarder," Lottie said, as soon as their father had gone. "That is all it amounts to, and we just got rid of the others. The profit could not have been very much, either. Of course we don't know, because Papa handled the money."

"We have our own meat and potatoes and vegetables," Alice said. "All the things from the farm. I suppose that is what he counts on. And the professor will pay in money. We have to remember how badly the bank is doing."

"We don't need reminding," Amy said. "I never was so tired of anything in my life as I am of turning skirts! Half the time I don't know whether I'm going forward or backward, with last year's back gore in front or the year before's front breadth behind!"

"Poor baby!" Alice said.

"Well, it seems a shame to waste good woolen," Lottie said. "And blouses and skirts are so much in the mode. If I had a shilling, I would buy that blouse pattern I saw sketched this very morning. That old red plaid skirt of mine would make up into a beautiful blouse. I have enough new cambric to do for a lining, and this model has the sweetest knife-plaits, and invisible front closing!"

"Is it to wear inside or out of the skirt?" Amy said.

"Either one," Lottie said. "And there are tucks both back and front. Let me get the illustration!"

"You get Papa's shirts from the big-room wardrobe!"

Alice said. "And Amy, you empty all the drawers of the bureau. I will sweep."

"It was swept Friday," Lottie said.

"There is always dust," Alice said. "I suppose we shall have to make it as pleasant as possible for the professor. I don't know what to do about the hole in the carpet."

"Move the bed over a little way," Amy said.

"Oh, we can't!" Lottie said. "It has stood just there ever since the cabinetmaker set it up. Papa said so."

"Well, it has to be moved now," Alice said. "Papa must have set his feet on the floor in precisely the same spot every morning his whole life long. With a thump, too. Even the floor is worn, under the carpet."

"It is his own fault," Lottie said. "We've tried hard enough to keep a throw-rug there. It isn't our fault if he kicks it out of the way."

"Mary tried all her life," Alice said. "And she said Miss Sarah Matthews tried when Papa was a boy. That seems like a long time ago. It seems almost stubborn of Papa."

"Why, Alice!" Lottie said.

"I bet the professor has long whiskers," Amy said. "I bet he is bent over and walks with two canes. And I bet he won't keep the slop-jar in its side of the washstand any better than the students did."

"Amy Winfield!" Alice said.

"Don't say 'I bet,'" Lottie said.

"I suppose we ought to give him the new toilet set," Alice said. "The washbowl is a trifle bigger, and anyway the handle is off that other chamber. I always fancied it in Lottie's room because the wall paper has roses too."

"*I bet* he is so nearsighted he won't notice whether it has roses on it or thoroughwort," Amy said. "Give him the old plain white set."

"No!" Lottie said. "The pitcher is cracked, and Totty Morton threw the soap dish down the cistern. He is the *worst* child!"

"Maybe we ought to put the commode in there," Alice said. "If you really think he won't keep things put away. It would make the room so much neater for him to study in."

"Give him to understand," Amy said, "that he is to go out to the closet. And let no more be said about it."

"And have him washing his hands at the pump!" Alice said. "And forever tracking through the kitchen! I should say not!"

"Well, don't get huffy," Amy said. "He'll be enough of an old crank. And he will be here before we know it. We had better get busy."

They rubbed their grandmother's bureau until it shone, and the great high bedstead, timidly marvelling, each one to herself, at all that had happened in it. They dusted the small inlaid table by the bed: once Louanna's psalter had rested upon it, at a decorous angle between her hymn book

and *Poems* by Lucy Larcom. Her candlestick still stood there: it was frail white china with a painted thread of twisted vine. She had liked to read in bed by its flickering gilt finger, but Wing Winfield said *no;* no decent woman read in bed—poetry, at any rate. He carried Mrs. Larcom's book down into the parlor and made a point of setting it on the highest shelf of the bookcase. Alice remembered how her mother had taken it out and locked it in the desk with the ledger. Cleaning house a few springs ago she had found it there, a cross-stitched ribbon marking the place:

> "Learn thou, Soul of mine, past doubt,
> Thou canst all things do without. . . ."

There was only dust where the ledger had been. Alice wiped it off the shelf and the books that were there, and put them back. She and Lottie must watch carefully lest Amy's willful feet be tempted down the same wayward path that Mamma's had taken. For Mamma should never have suffered herself to be alone in the woods with Professor Cavendish—not a single instant! That in itself was compromising enough: no wonder the village said that she was deliberately deceiving Papa. All that was over now, however it had been, and Mamma was dead. Her daughters turned the feather bed and spread fresh sheets for the strange professor. Should they leave the candle-

stick by the bed?—the room seemed unfamiliar without it. Surely they had never stood here in a row, their aprons primly tied behind them. No; there were only two of them then; Amy was the purple-faced baby under the counterpane with Mamma. The pillow cases had six tucks and knitted lace. The doctor came up the stairs. His nose and eyes with their square-rimmed spectacles made three unexpected islands in the sea of his beard.

"Getting around late," he said. "First a wheel came off the gig, then Betsy threw a shoe." He dusted his hands on his coat-tails. "Well, well, Louanna," he said. "Let me see that tongue."

If a long-legged, wide-winged bird had dropped the baby down the chimney as Mary said, what had Mamma's tongue to do with it? Alice straightened up from smoothing the new professor's bed and asked herself again, twenty-one years later. "We must give these blankets an airing," she said. "The professor may be the particular kind. Anyway, since Papa says we have to have him, we'll fix things nice for him."

5

He was young! The sun had never lain so golden on the hills nor mottled the kitchen porch so tenderly through

the apple boughs from which the yellow leaves drifted. Old-field balsam had never spread so softly white over the countryside, nor woodbine wound the fence rails with a brighter glory. The roads had never been fringed so generously with wild asters. In the orchards even the windfalls were round and red: there had not been too much rain, after all.

He certainly was not handsome: that was too much to expect. His eyes were small and pale behind his glasses, but his face was broad and kind. It wore a perpetually distant expression, as if his interest had come to anchor ten thousand miles and ten centuries away, which indeed it had.

They had to give him Louanna's place at the table. Only the tureen had sat there, until the boarders came. But Wing Winfield said that Amy must sit next to him, and Alice would be jumping up to serve the professor. She would take the seat nearest the door, and put Lottie over on the other side.

The first meal was rather hard to get through. But the professor was a hearty eater. He could not be too terribly lonely or homesick if he really enjoyed a second helping.

"What do you think of our town, Professor?" Lottie said.

"Mmmm," he said. "Very nice. Remarkable conglomeratic formation under these hills, I understand."

"We think our hills are pretty," Amy said.

"Pretty!" the professor said. "Well, perhaps—pretty."

"Will you have some coffee, Professor?" Alice said.

It was unfair to judge him by stray remarks at supper: he was probably weary from his long ride in the steam cars, and he might be thinking of loved ones whom he had left far away, in some city in the East.

"Did you have a tiresome trip?" Lottie said. "I have heard that a day's ride in the train is most fatiguing, with cinders flying and whistles blowing, and so many unusual confusions. I should think you would be tired to death."

The professor helped himself to more plum jam. He gazed beneficently about the table, his glance falling first on one, then on another.

"The train?" he said mildly. "I did not notice. No, it must have been very pleasant. I passed the time with a new volume—some interesting comments on the Pleistocene."

But he was young, however bewildering his conversation. And they could accustom themselves to *faults* and *strata* and *formations* and *eras* as well as to anything else. It was wholly a matter of becoming used to it.

"Do you like to read, Professor?" Amy said. "We have lately finished *The House of the Wolf*, by Stanley Weyman. Have you read it?"

"I never bother to read a novel," he said. "I feel that I have not the time." He leaned back in his chair and rested his fork for a moment. "*Time* has already accom-

plished a great deal more than I shall be able to cope with, however diligent my effort. *Ge*ology is my subsistence, but *ar*cheology shall ever be my passion. To think that years upon years ago this very vicinity was inhabited by peoples beyond our eager comprehension. . . ."

"Oh, yes!" Lottie said. "You mean the Mound-builders!"

"Precisely," the professor said. "Or we must call them that for want of a better name." He leaned forward. "That is my purpose in coming here," he confided. "I desire to explore the region and delve into its ancient truths. Let others toil in Rome and Babylonia; let my colleagues strive as they will in Assyria and Greece. Here is my field of endeavor! It has been investigated all too casually, or considered as a mere matter of course. Besides, the insects were fearful in Assyria, and my drawing ink dried up in Babylon."

Then it was no wonder he had read a book instead of gazing out of the steam cars window! Assyria! Babylon! The wide, wide sea and the wide-spreading world! The professor went calmly on, spreading Alice's freshly churned butter on a thick slice of her homemade bread, piling Lottie's jam from the garden plum tree onto that, pouring Bossie's rich buttercup cream into his coffee. Oh, how could he perform such usual everyday matter-of-course nothings with the very hands which had gathered the sands of Asia's rolling plains and sifted them like

common dust, back through his fingers, back onto the great distant continent of which they were a part? How could he lick a drop of jam off his thumb nail, wipe his lips with his napkin, make himself more comfortable in his chair, twisting and turning and giving his trousers leg a tweak, just like any ordinary man who had never journeyed fifty miles beyond the edge of the village?

Wing Winfield wiped his own mustaches and turned toward the professor.

"What do you think of our college—university?" he said. "Do you not find it commodious and—well, progressive, for this far west? They tell us that it is. Of course, most of us stay pretty close at home. Our obligations keep us tied right here in the village."

"There is to be a celebration when the university is sixty years old," Amy said. "A parade, and a picnic in Mason's grove. But that is four years yet! Though plans are already under way."

"You interrupted Papa," Alice said. "Will you have more of anything, Professor? Do let me offer you another helping of lemon cream pie."

How different life looked with the professor in the house! Henceforth the college bell would take on a new note, pealing out over the valley. Last year, and for several years, it had meant nothing more than the passing of the hours and the days: Josiah Winfield seemed so far in the background, and Professor Wainwright was dead;

marked by a smaller stone, to be sure, but every bit as dead as Josiah Winfield. Over them both the beeches whispered or moaned or cast cool soundless shadows, according to season, and at Commencement time returning alumni stood about their graves and proclaimed again the university's obligation to the stalwart characters of its past. But in between, they were forgotten, oftener than not. The Winfield girls had not climbed the hill for ever so long. Amy could not remember her grandmother Wainwright, who had passed away before Louanna. Once Alice's Sunday school class had insisted on picnicking in the college woods, and the very idea of it had thrown her into a bad attack of sick headache. Little by little Wing Winfield had felt drawn away from the hilltop and all that went on there. Then the boarders came: that brought the old interest part way back; the girls had attended the literary societies' contest in the spring. The Homerics won the debate, but the Euclidians excelled in oratory and the essay. Wing Winfield had walked to town that night: unfinished work at the bank, he said, after warning them to hurry home as soon as the program was over. They had obeyed so well that Lottie lost her fascinator; then they all had to retrace their steps as accurately as possible, giggling with nervousness and worry. Suppose they should not find it! Suppose some young gentlemen should speak to them as they searched the dark fence corners where it might have drifted in their haste! But there it fluttered,

a film of pink crochet, under Deacon Parkham's syringa bush. Nothing happened; this time they reached home without adventure. Nobody spoke to them, though they arrived at the front gate in chills from excitement. Wing Winfield was already home; he had just come in from the yard, he said. He had thought he heard a disturbance in that direction. He was sure there must have been some varmint in the chicken house.

The girls always went to Commencement exercises: everybody went, regardless of acquaintance with any member of the graduating class, regardless of special interest in the college. The professors were so dignified in their flowing black robes; the music was so inspiring!—and how wonderful it was to think of all those young men ready to launch their frail and hopeful barques upon the sea of life! Sad, too. Even though one did not know a certain young man, his name came to be quite familiar during his four years' stay in the village. One found oneself reluctant to see him go, perhaps never to return. Or, more likely, to return most importantly, after a Commencement or two, and make patronizing speeches to the undergraduates, and shake hands with the people of the village, remembering their names incorrectly or not at all. He usually had a wife and perhaps a lumpy, heavy baby. He would mount a chair and lead his classmates in the singing of the old songs. They all would march to the college graveyard and decorate special graves with rever-

ence and complacence. Alice and Lottie were surprised, sometimes, at the thought of how many classes they had watched return for a first, fifth, *tenth* reunion! Was it possible that Cubby Talmadge had been gone from the village ten whole years? Not that either of them had so much as a speaking acquaintance with Cubby Talmadge, but everybody in the village had known him at sight. He had a distinctive way, and besides he had sung in the choir. They had seen him first the Sunday morning the memorial window was dedicated: his hair had turned purple from its strange stained glass. Yet he might have been a blond-mustached boy angel, standing there in the gilded heaven of the choir loft. *Lift up your heads,* he beseeched them, and they had at once. *Lift up your heads!* Every woman in the congregation pushed hers through a cloud.

To think he had been gone ten years! His wife was a lifeless-looking creature, with her Watteau coat bunchy in the wrong places, so that it resembled a badly cut dressing sacque. Their vicinity swarmed with their offspring: thin little girls in Roman stockings, and a noisy, troublesome boy whom Cubby had to hustle behind a shed and spank.

Occasionally when a student graduated and went away, he took a village girl with him. Or came back in a year or so and married her at a church wedding, with bells and flowers and white gloves and a pealing organ. Once in a great while an underclassman married a girl from the

village. Sometimes they both went away; sometimes he moved into the house with her family and went on with his college course. Or a student might disappear in the middle of a school year. He was supposed to have "jumped the shotgun." Alice and Lottie considered that a curious phrase: some student slang, no doubt. College boys had the most peculiar ways of saying things.

Now once more they would feel themselves a part of it all. The college bell would ring out to say that the professor was in his classroom, lecturing to his pupils on the history of the earth. A later bell would mean: *"He is coming to dinner! He has started down the hill. He is halfway down. He is crossing the Seminary campus. He is crossing the street. Listen for his step upon the porch!"*

He was nothing like as much trouble as the students. He was so quiet there was no way of telling for certain that he was in his room, hour after hour. Though of course the girls knew he was in his room. They had sat all the time in the parlor, and he could not possibly have descended the stairs without their seeing him. There was no way on earth he could get out of the walnut house without their seeing him.

Amy did not suppose he would notice, but, in any event, she had never been satisfied with the shape of her mouth. Each time she knew he was coming into the room where she was she would make it a point to repeat quickly, silently, just before:

"Fanny Finch fried four fat frogs
For Frances Fowler's father."

It was guaranteed to leave the lips in a perfect Cupid's bow. Ladies who faithfully practiced it were forthwith possessed of mouths like rosebuds, that moment awakened to full voluptuous beauty.

Alice said: "Amy, what on earth are you muttering? I wish to goodness you would stop talking to yourself!"

Wing Winfield lapsed into one of his rare periods of cheerfulness. Goldenrod swept the hillsides like a swift glorious flame. Sumac lit its vermilion candles in every thicket. Halfway through the sunlit afternoons the pigeons from Winfield Hall would wheel across the sky and above the maples, over and over the walnut house.

The professor could be most amusing when he was not talking about bones or rocks or the Silurian system. But the conversation was bound to be turned upon one or the other. There seemed no positive method of heading him off. He might sit through an entire meal doing nothing but eating; another time he might tell a joke or relate an anecdote of one of his interesting foreign expeditions. They would have liked to hear more about his travels, but there was forever the uncertainty of an impending excavation, with subsequent discovery of a femur or skull, or at best a knuckle or rib. Still, there was the unquenchable hope that calamity might be avoided.

At any rate, while the professor schooled them in the lore of his calling, Wing Winfield could scarcely insert a word about Cleveland or Harrison or tax or tariff or trusts or silver and gold, and his theories on the current depression. He might even forget how few people had come into the bank that day and how little money they had deposited.

6

HE WENT to church with them on Sunday, sitting next to the aisle, with Wing Winfield between him and the three girls who had retrimmed their hats for the occasion and polished their shoes as bright as could be with *Brown's French Dressing.*

There was a time when they had dreaded going to church, people stared at them so. But Wing Winfield said they must bear it as best they could: time would make a difference. And it had, especially after Louanna's place was empty. The village began to forget: there were so many other things to think about. And the Winfield girls were always so quiet and demure, looking down into their laps when the students filed in, and covering their faces properly during the prayer. Surely nothing exciting could ever be expected of them, though they *had* received one

mysterious package from Washington, D. C., and several weeks later dispatched a larger one in return. The postmaster's wife told that, and the Methodist minister had just happened to glance over Alice's shoulder as she received the parcel while he was standing at the grated window waiting to purchase a stamp. Somebody else had seen Amy and Lottie on the way to town with the larger box: of course it might have been a present for one of their uncles, the Wainwright boys, two of whom were college professors like their father, away off in the East somewhere, but after what the postmaster's wife said, that would never do because none of the Wainwright boys lived in Washington, D. C. Nobody knew just where they lived, upon thinking it over, but it certainly was not Washington. No, not Washington at all.

The actions to be counted upon from the Winfield girls were definite and sure. They would be at Aid and Mission Circle on time and could be depended upon for cake or cookies at a benefit. They were active in the Temperance Society, and of the list of boys Alice had been given to solicit in behalf of the cause, only two had failed to sign the pledge: one of those was ill with rheumatic fever and in no temptation whatever; the other was away at his grandfather's funeral. Besides, he was only six years old, and barely able to print his name on his slate. Maybe it would be better to put him down for next winter's campaign, after all.

The Sunday after college opened was always an excitement, so many new faces to see and familiar faces to welcome back. The language professor had been to Europe during the summer: Germany and France. He looked exactly the same in spite of it: the identical hat and the selfsame bags at the knees of his trousers. Strange, that a man could go all the way to Europe and be gone the entire summer, yet come back unchanged even to the way he fumbled for small silver when the long-handled velvet pouches were thrust along the pews for the offering. Alice marvelled especially, for she knew that a trip to Columbus altered her so that she could hardly recognize herself: she felt new, or at least made-over, from head to foot, though more likely than not she had purchased nothing more than a yard of ribbon, or enough lace to edge the pansy bureau cover she was embroidering.

Lottie could not get her mind onto the sermon, however hard she tried. The professor was sitting in the pew with them, she was afraid the fire would burn out under the chicken stewing at home for pot-pie, and she could scarcely keep still for wanting to nudge Amy who otherwise might not notice Jennie Sanford's skeleton bang—where had she ever got the five dollars for it? Since she dared not nudge Amy, Lottie had to go on thinking her own thoughts: of course all false hair must come off nuns in the convents—how their hearts must break at the snip of the scissors, and how staunch their faith, to sacri-

fice their long wavy beautiful hair for it! Lottie felt that she would rather *die* than have her hair cut off: once in a while one saw a woman with short hair on the street or in the stores at the county seat. "Poorhouse women" they called them, for at the poorhouse all the women had short hair. And there were dreadful unmentionable girls who might rarely be seen by day at the fairgrounds—some of them wore short hair, in frizzed thatches the color of sun-burned cornsilk. And, of course, there were always a few nice girls whose hair had been lost as the result of typhoid fever: in that case it was quite likely to come back in curly. Lottie wondered if her own hair would come in curly if she were to have typhoid fever. She half hoped that she might be stricken with it, curls were so attractive and made arranging the coiffure twice as easy.

Amy sat looking straight ahead of her. The minister was in her line of vision, but she saw him only as a dim shape which opened its mouth, lifted its arm, nodded its head. She wished that her father had permitted her to sit beside the professor, but perhaps it was just as well: Alice and Lottie would have been jealous. They were jealous after breakfast when the professor had offered to pump a bucket of water for her. He could not easily have avoided offering to pump, to be sure, since she had advanced to get the water while he was standing with his back against the sink-trough, absolutely in her way. Or that was what Lottie said. Lottie was mean to say it. Just because life had

passed forever beyond her and Alice was no reason for them to fuss and flutter all of a sudden, singeing their bangs terribly, which served them right for being deceitful, for Papa had long ago forbidden the use of curling irons. Amy thought: last spring when the students were boarding with us the girls both made a ridiculous rumpus if the young men so much as looked at me. They make me tired; so old and fussy, and all the time jerking their dust caps off because the college bell has rung and the professor will be there any minute.

But there they all sat: if not precisely beside the professor, certainly near enough for every head in church to be humming with the burden each tongue would let loose in the very minute of the benediction. Amy was almost glad of it. So little excitement came to the walnut house, *anything* was welcome if it could render the days a trifle less like one another. Of course the students had been a diversion, and even the silkworms. . . . Five dollars and twelve cents! How her fingers had ached from picking the osage leaves and how the thorns had scratched her hands. All for nothing. She decided miserably that a great deal of life was for nothing: surely the hardest parts of it; then her mind shot back to last night when she had happened home early from Hattie Miller's while Alice and Lottie were spending the evening with sick old Mrs. Plothers, because they *knew* I would stay at Hattie's till nine, Amy thought, or they would have made me go with them. And

Papa was at the bank! Wing Winfield always went to the bank Saturday evenings, though he could usually be seen any moment from dusk on, standing in front of it or sitting on the hard wooden bench that stood there, or, if it were winter, sitting inside with a friend or two who spat at and often missed the open blaze of the Franklin stove.

Amy wanted to go to bed, but did she dare, with the professor moving about upstairs? Should she run over to Mrs. Plothers' and join her sisters? Should she sit in the parlor and pretend that she did not know the professor was in the house? Ought she to take a little walk, or would that make too much of a point of it? And it was Saturday night: the portable bathtub had been carried into the professor's room, and he had been given to understand that there was plenty of hot water on the back of the kitchen stove.

He had his shoes on, at any rate. He was not in the bathtub now, wherever he had been or was going to be. He was up and about the master's bedroom, marching from one end to the other, his footfalls slow and regular upon the walnut floor.

She was on the stairs. She was in the hall. She had to pass the open door of his room.

"Why, Miss Amy!" he said.

"Why, Professor!" she said.

"I thought I was alone," he said. "I like to be alone and think out some of my problems."

"I am sorry if I disturbed you," she said.

"No, no," he said. "This was not so serious. I had this minute decided to purchase one of the new safety bicycles. I believe I would find it of assistance in my various expeditions. I could save time and energy, riding about the country on it."

The professor upon a safety, skimming along the streets of the village, whizzing like the wind over the country roads! And he had told her first! What *would* Alice and Lottie say? She had never been this close to him before. No, he was not as young as they had decided in the first rapturous daze of realizing that he did not wear long whiskers. Thirty, perhaps. A birthday or two ahead of Alice. A man of the world, for had he not been to Babylon and Rome? Oh, he was a thousand times more dazzling than any student could ever be, though far more formidable, with that remote and questioning expression, and even a look of vague reproof lurking within his mild blue eyes.

"Professor——" Amy said.

"What is it, Miss Amy?"

"Would you please——?" she said. (How did she dare? How could she be so bold?) "Oh, Professor, I hate to ask it, but would you mind writing in my autograph album? Not a sentiment—you are so busy—but just your inscription. I would be so grateful!"

"Oh, yes," he said. "An album, eh? Yes, yes, indeed."

"Shall I bring it, then?" she said.

"Of course," he said. "Yes, get it, Miss Amy. Dear me, I have some exercise papers yet to examine."

"It will not take a minute," Amy said.

There was nothing to do but follow him into his room: he had already retreated there and was working at his study table. There were chips of rock on bureau and bed: one could only imagine how he managed to sleep among them. The bed was piled too with stacks of books: thick, uninteresting-looking books. Mamma's candlestick was not on the bedside stand: a thin oval stone was there instead, and a small bare white bone. Exactly like Flossie Friendly buries in the canna bed, Amy said to herself, but the professor saw her notice it and leaped from behind the pile of papers at the table.

"Do you see my bone?" he said. "It is all I discovered after digging for hours. Strange, to find only one little bone. And what does it imply? What is the secret which must repose there in the earth where I found it? But I shall return next Saturday. I shall dig with all my might. I shall search until the knowledge of the ages is a mere alphabet before my eyes."

"Here is my album," Amy said.

"Album?" the professor said. "Ah, yes. So many young ladies have approached me with these things. Well, let me see . . . I had a sentiment. . . ."

He was going to inscribe a sentiment! Not just his

name, but something to be read over and over, remembering the one who had written it there. She had offered him the page with the forget-me-nots upon it: it was the prettiest blank page that was left in the album. Amy leaned over the table while the professor removed his self-inking pen from his pocket, tested it upon a sheet of theme paper, and flourished it above the clean white space:

"May happiness be thy lot,
And peace thy steps attend;
Accept this tribute of respect
From one who is thy friend."

What made her heart pound against her ribs so? She must be getting into her own room: Papa and the girls might come home any minute. And there was the portable bathtub sitting square in the middle of the floor. How strange that she had only this instant noticed it, or had she seen it before with the kind of sight which sees nothing, exactly as she was to gaze at the minister the next morning?

"*Thy friend!*" Oh, it was sweet to have a friend, especially a secret friend, and she could think of that now when any sort of misery oppressed her. Though of course she was still disappointed over not getting the changeable silk dress: the professor could not compensate for that, however tenderly and chivalrously he wrote in her album.

He is under the same roof with me, her heart kept singing. He sits at the table with me, but I intend to keep my real feelings about him entirely hidden from Alice and Lottie; I am sure he will agree when we have an opportunity to talk it over.

She wished that she could accompany him on his excursions among the rocky hills. She could imagine themselves pausing to rest upon sunny, smooth field boulders: he would tell her about his work and she would tell him her dreams. The hours would glide softly by; his spade and grubbing-hoe, or whatever he dug with, would lie forgotten on the hillside. All through the minister's prayer, Amy sent Heavenward a separate and private petition for a bicycle and a handsome Columbia habit of mode flannel, or (which would be more sensible for the field trips) one of the Syrian skirts: she would prefer it fashioned of dark grey hopsacking. Of course a divided skirt was bold, but she and the professor would pedal up and over the hills, and doubtless he would expect her to do a great amount of tramping over rough country.

There is a land of pure delight, the congregation warbled. *There is a land of pure delight,* Amy sang more gaily, more happily, than all the rest. Already she wandered in it with the professor, or whirled on a Gales or a Columbia or a Rouse-Hazard *Sylph* along its most beautiful bypaths. *There is a land of pure delight,* the profes-

sor chanted a trifle tardily. It was too bad that Wing Winfield's monotonous bass and Alice's high tight soprano and Lottie's flat eager alto had to come in between.

7

LOTTIE WAS working at the stove when the professor came downstairs in the morning. She was thinking about getting breakfast over so that she and Alice could put the washing on to boil. Alice had gone outdoors to feed the hens and open the chicken house. On Mondays they tried to begin the day a trifle earlier because of the washing. With the professor in the house it was difficult. Once breakfast was over and he had started out of the house they could run upstairs and slip into their old wash-day wrappers. Monday seemed the only morning in the week that he was not prompt for breakfast. They could hear his steps crisscrossing the floor above. If he would only hurry, *hurry,* they thought: at this rate we shall not be through when he comes back at noon for dinner. But this morning he was dressed and downstairs before the fire was hot: Alice would be nowhere near done with the morning chores.

"Mercy!" Lottie said. "Oh, good morning, Professor."

"Good morning, Miss Lottie," he said. "A fine morning!"

"Yes," she said. "A good day for——" But no, she would not say for washing. Let him think some hired woman came in after breakfast to do it. Let him believe they sent it out, to one of the disreputable families in the south end of town. Let him not think of it at all, for why should such a thought occur to a man who was busy solving the riddles of soil and stone? Little he cared how the household got its washing done as long as clean sheets and pillow cases were on his bed and clean towels over the rail at the end of his washstand. Besides, it was not fair to help him suspect the state the bank was in: poor Papa tried as hard as he could, but times had never been so hard. It was well enough for older people to talk about the awful panics of years ago, and Lottie herself could remember 1873. She could hear her mother's voice: "Any news today, Wing?" and Wing Winfield's answer: "Not a word, Louanna." But the bank had survived, and so had the college, which was every so often upon the point of closing for financial reasons. Grandpapa Wainwright never had collected all of his back salary. He would never need it now; the pigeons alighted upon the stone at his head with the same friendliness they had perched upon his outstretched finger many a time on the wind-swept campus. Lottie wondered why her impression of the cam-

pus was forever one of wind: the trees were bent with it, the ivy vines were twisted with it. Professor Wainwright's office had been a wide square high-ceilinged space for the wind to play in; she had seen it enter around the rattling doors and tall windows; she had watched it whisk her grandfather's coat-tails and flutter his beard and ruffle the cotton in his ears. She had seen it turn the pages of his books so that he would have to begin turning them back, wearily, absently, with the air of one who knows he will never find the place again.

Yet there the college stood, as clear and certain as Grandfather Winfield's dream. Grandpapa Wainwright was but one of those who had walked as a dreamer through its various vicissitudes. The dreamers died and the dream survived, Lottie thought, stirring the cracked wheat in the kettle. If times ever were good again she would purchase a double kettle in which cereal and custard and such could be cooked without stirring or burning. Her mother had had a double skillet once: was it her own, or Amarila Winfield's? Mamma never had anything of her own, Lottie thought, unless it might have been her poetry. None of them mentioned that, even in the unsyllabled words of their minds. Not even when a year ago a small thin volume of verse appeared in the village. It was lent and re-lent; somebody said it could be purchased in the Columbus book shops: several families were known to have copies or suspected to have copies, just as

the barber shop and saloon were known or suspected to have copies of the *Police Gazette*. But nobody would admit possession. The book had invariably been presented on the occasions of Christmas or the anniversary of a birth; it had been left on the table by a chance caller; it had been found upon a buggy seat or in the steam cars or in any improbable place. Yet it was a decent book; most of the poems in it were poems and nothing more—verses of death and the seasons, of Nature and botanical life. Excepting two! Nobody admitted knowing them, but somehow everyone did. The first was called *Rendezvous*, and began:

"Within the secret woods
Where sprang the first spring flower,
Happiness rambled too,
One April hour."

The other was entitled *Lost Love:*

"Lament our separate grief!
Bitter the path we took.
Wormwood alone could leaf
Beside that forest brook."

So the village was right. And the college had been justified in ousting Professor Cavendish, bag and baggage. But

of course it was a recognized fact that such affairs were largely the lady's fault. The college could doubtless have retained him without danger to the morals of the young gentlemen in his classes, but there would be the inevitable questions concerning him, and there were the perpetual considerations of character and example. Mostly the village had believed that he ought to be ousted, yet there were those who felt that such a promising young man should be forgiven a single misdemeanor. Especially when it was evident that he had been tempted. A young man could scarcely be expected never to yield to temptation. He should be permitted the sowing of a few wild oats. Besides, he was such a fine, clean and personable young gentleman, and a genius in music and literature as well. They would have a difficult task finding a tenor to replace him in the choir. Not to mention his poetry! Poetry was such a graceful and unusual art, and the young man in whom such talent reposed should be offered every encouragement. But alas, he was gone, new books, pink cheeks, portfolio and all, in the flash of an eye and before the Wednesday when he had promised to read his Nature lyrics before the newly organized Every-Other-Week Study Club. So there was nothing to do at the meeting but talk about Louanna Wainwright's dreadful behavior (as well brought up as she had been, too!) and missing Professor Cavendish's delightful lyrics. This element of village opinion was glad to hear of his appointment as professor

of English in a large Eastern university the very next September. It felt that he had been misunderstood. But like everybody else its members possessed their copies of his book by accident. They would not purchase it—oh, dear, no! Books of poetry were almost never worth buying, with the exception of Shakespeare's and a few others'. Particularly with times so hard. But of course it had been interesting to just glance through the volume of Professor Cavendish's a stray visitor had evidently forgotten.

No, Lottie Winfield would not mention the washing. It was bad enough to have to do it, with Mamma's wonderful Doty's Washer broken down now and pushed away back in the corner of the barn loft with wisps of hay in it, among which every May the nervous old yellow hen was bound to steal her nest. It was bad enough to have to get one's hands red and rough, with never a cent to buy *Viola Cream* to rub into them. Mutton tallow did fairly well, and there was a way of putting rose petals with it to prevent its smelling so horrid. But everything took time and trouble, and the house was so big! Whatever had possessed Grandfather Winfield to build such a place?—great planks and beams and the old-fashioned windows which could not be washed without long terrors of climbing. Maybe if he and Grandmother had lived they would have had a large family. It was too bad. Everything was too bad. Lottie sighed for the prosperity of a few years

ago: it must be admitted that the bank had done well enough for a while after the crisis when she was a little girl. They had not noticed when they were growing up: Mary had been there to do the work, and there was the delirium of Mamma's dying. Then the bank had thrived for a time. In 1889 Papa had purchased the iron deer for the lawn, and had had their sealskin jackets made. It was comforting to know that the fur would wear practically forever, though the military cord fastenings were out of style now and badly frayed besides. Maybe they could do something about them before another winter.

And here was the professor downstairs before he had any business to be! Lazy of Amy to sleep late on Monday, of all mornings, but they had spoiled her because she was the youngest. The table was only half set, and Alice always stayed in the chicken yard until she was called. It was the same with Papa and the barn: he would curry on and on though the horses looked fine enough for exhibition at the state fair. And cracked wheat would lump unless it were stirred: Lottie must be at the stove; she must be setting the table; she must stand at the back door and call into the mild frost of morning: "Pa-*puh!* Al-*uce! Breakfast!*"

"A wonderful morning," the professor said, as if he had not mentioned it before, as if he had never mentioned the weather before in the whole span of his years, as if

indeed weather were a quality which had that very morning been invented for his singular approval and delight. "Miss Lottie," he said, "—er, Miss Lottie. . . ."

"Yes, Professor," Lottie said.

"I—er, Miss Lottie, may I tell you something? May I divulge a secret?"

Lottie reached for a dipper of water, raised it with an uncertain hand, drank, and replaced the dipper in the bucket.

"Yes," she said. "Oh, yes, Professor, you may be sure I shall never betray your confidence. I am ready to hear whatever you may have to intrust to my ears."

"Well, then," he said. "I have made a decision. After long deliberation and serious consideration, I have made up my mind to buy a safety."

"A safety!" Lottie said. "Oh, Professor, how you will enjoy it! And how we shall all enjoy seeing you upon it!" But why should her heart beat so over the pleasure of visioning the professor upon his safety, and that as yet in mere contemplation? Why had she turned her back to the cracked wheat and coffee and bacon: let it all be scorched, as far as she was concerned; let it smoke and frizzle and burn. Let the table wait unset forever, as long as there should be others to sit down to it besides herself and the professor.

"Professor," she said.

"Yes, Miss Lottie."

No, she was not twenty-seven, going on twenty-eight! Nobody could be twenty-seven and feel trembly and hot and cold and incredibly like giggling. Nobody could care so much at whatever age: *Oh, love has come at last! Reach out, Professor, and gather it in! Love, love, reach out!*

"I want to ask a favor," she said. "I wonder if you would write in my album?"

"Why, yes, to be sure," he said. "Do you have it handy?"

"It is in Grandmother's desk," she said. "I can get it in a second."

There was a blank page with water color pansies. She opened the album there and spread it on the kitchen table. He drew his pen from his pocket.

"May happiness be thy lot,
And peace thy steps attend;
Accept this tribute of respect
From one who is thy friend."

"There," he said, signing his name. "I hope you will like it."

"Oh, I do!" she said. And what a delicate sentiment it was, meaning so much yet saying so little! The girls would be furious. But no, it was *too* delicate for them to comprehend. Their eyes would see something else, and their

mouths make light of it. Sisters never understood one in the slightest. She would not let them see it, not for a while, at least. And they should never suspect the affection that was that moment budding within her heart and the professor's. When it had grown to a full fragrant blossom was soon enough. And she would be a faculty lady like Grandmamma Wainwright, dispensing hospitality to poor and discouraged students as everyone said Grandmamma had done so graciously until she began having poor health. Perhaps among the many young men should come one worthy and in need—his distress might be only temporary; he would do very nicely for Amy, after he had graduated and found a position paying enough money for her support. And with the professors might some day come a lonely widower: just the person for Alice! Alice was twenty-nine—too old to make a young man happy, and there was no telling how old she would be by the time the widower appeared to partake of her married sister's hospitality. Certainly there was no such person among the professors now, Lottie thought, hastily considering the faculty in turn: Professor Massenger, Greek, wife, four children; Professor Timmingdale, theology and history of the Bible, wife, seven children; Professor Kannon, Romance languages, wife, three children, and Mrs. Kannon in that condition again; Professor Davine, wife and let me count—Tommy and Davey and Dora and Janet and Maggie—only five; it somehow seemed more. And

Professor Francis, botany and biology: Mrs. Francis was assuredly in that condition also. The other professors and their households passed in swift review. No, not a widower in the lot, nor even a bachelor except—well, there he was, waiting for his breakfast! Oh, what beautiful, what distinguished breakfasts they would have when there were just the two of them together; flowers and lovely dishes and elegant conversation, with occasionally a student they would be befriending out of their love and bounty, or the bereaved professor upon whom they must shower all the kindness and compassion that life together would cause to flourish like flowers on the pure fertile soil of their encompassing hearts.

He had confided in her; he had written in her album, a dear, personal, especial verse full of meaning and import. He was there beside her in the kitchen; the world was a strange bright haze of confusion; the pump and stove and cupboard and floor moved away to make room for the gay new flutter of happiness; then they all closed in again. There was not time to put the album back in the desk; had she thanked him for what he had put there in black and white, as good as a spoken vow in some gold June of the future?

"Thank you, Professor," she said. The words were inadequate, but what was the need of words between them? Lottie was quite contented that he did not answer, but lifted the dipper instead and quaffed a long steady drink

from the precise spot on the rim where no time ago at all her quivering lips had rested.

8

" 'Twas in the mild September,
September, September,
'Twas in the mild September,
And the mocking bird was singing far and wide."

NOT THAT Alice Winfield ever expected to hear a mocking bird, but the song was appropriate to the day on which she was singing it. Once she had asked Wing Winfield if he had listened to a mocking bird at any time during his months in the South years ago when she was a tiny baby, and he had said no; if he had, he did not remember; there was plenty to listen to during a war without bothering about birds.

"I feel like one forsaken,
Forsaken, forsaken . . ."

Alice sang, but perhaps it was not quite as bad as that. The professor had stepped up close to her in the hall that

noon and had intrusted her with the secret that he was going to buy a bicycle! Lottie and Amy would never get over his telling her the news first. But of course she was older, and the professor could easily see that she was more dependable—not flighty or silly like Amy, or likely to giggle or burst out into an impetuous flow of chatter as Lottie was. A safety bicycle, and he rather believed it was to be an Imperial, but he had not decided for certain: there were so many good brands to select from. And he was going to make his Saturday expeditions on it, poor fellow. Alice felt sorry for a man who had to be bothered with the earth itself, when all he really cared about was what he might find buried beneath it. When the university was out of debt from erecting Chemistry Hall and the Mathematics building, maybe it could afford to open a department of archeology, the way he hoped, and he could be the head of it and turn the old *faults* and *periods* and *fossils* over to someone who wanted to teach geology. Alice hoped that the professor would be happy. She could hardly believe that she had become so fond of him in so short a time, but of course in this case it was a plain matter of affection returned: when she could so easily perceive his feelings for her kindled like a flame within his eyes, naturally she was bound to consider him in a similar light. He *was* nice, if fearfully preoccupied with his work, and he was a gentleman to so thoughtfully conceal his regard for her before the others. It was too soon to make

it known: he had been there such a little while. When she really considered how short a while it was, Alice felt nervous and uncertain. But love *was* possible, even at first sight. A year ago last spring she had fallen to wondering about that and had written Ruth Ashmore of *The Ladies' Home Journal:* "Dear Ruth Ashmore, do tell me if you believe love at first sight is possible. I shall be looking for an answer in your column. And will you please suggest a remedy for a shiny nose? Yours very truly, A. J. W."

Of course at that time she had not so much as heard of the professor and she had had no idea of falling in love at first sight. But she had wanted an answer anyway, and it did seem a trifle crude to write a whole letter about a matter as unæsthetic as a shiny nose, though she badly needed advice about it. She had waited and watched, and then in a month or so there it was, right in *Side Talks With Girls:* "A. J. W. Popular fiction as well as certain accredited incidents of history tend to convince us that love at first sight is possible. For a shiny nose, throw a lump of borax into the water in which you bathe your face."

She had had to be very cautious about writing to Ruth Ashmore. Papa would never have forgiven her, and the girls would have thought her vain and silly. So she mailed the letter in Columbus, on an excursion there with Papa: they had ridden on the steam cars from the county seat and the journey had required two hours for the thirty

miles. Papa had decided that they should drive to the county seat and leave the horses in the livery barn for the day. The new electric road was operating cars back and forth every day, but one or two had jumped the track, and several times they had broken down. Horses were more dependable, Papa said. Electricity would never be proven as trustworthy as flesh and blood. But there were the seven miles to drive home that night, after the excitement of the steam cars, after mailing the letter, after seeing the marvelous fashions in the plate glass show windows of the big city stores; after meeting Papa at the west steps of the statehouse as they had arranged, and actually going to a restaurant for supper together.

Half a mile from the village the last car rattled past them with a glare and a whistle. The horses shied and reared. Alice was sure they would run away again, but her father managed to quiet them. She was sorry she had sent the letter, after all; it seemed sly and clandestine. She could not voice her remorse: vaguely she feared that perhaps she was too much her mother's child; there was little difference between sending a secret letter and meeting a lover surreptitiously in the woods. Papa would be grieved, if he knew. Perhaps it was her duty to tell him. But she was afraid to face his grief. And she did worry so about her shiny nose: she was so tired of being older than the other girls, Amy especially, and being so dowdy any more that she was ashamed to go places. Twenty-nine! Another

year and she would be thirty; after that life lost its meaning altogether. If she had only told the girls about the letter to Ruth Ashmore it would have seemed less wickedly underhand—but not to tell them! And not to tell Papa! After a year her sin loomed all the more terrible and unforgivable. Not even flavoring a custard with *Fairy Breath Extract* eased her distress for a minute. Hours spent with her embroidery made her feel all the worse, however meticulous her fine close stitches. Embroidery had been an implement toward Mamma's deceit. She could remember how Louanna had thrust the ledger behind her hoopskirt, snatching the embroidery from wherever it had fallen. It was wicked to deceive anybody. At twenty-nine she was doubtless an exceedingly wicked girl—*woman,* no, *girl!* She wanted to be a girl and have the fun that a girl should have. But most fun was wicked. Very likely it would be wrong to enjoy watching the professor set out upon his new safety, just as it was wrong for her to enjoy holding his secret in her heart, away from the girls and Papa, exactly as she had kept the secret of her letter to Ruth Ashmore. Or perhaps she should look at it in the light that he had offered her his confidence as a sacred trust, precisely because he expected her to revere it. And she would, come what might.

Just having the professor in the house was a pleasure. Men were so much more appreciative than women; not *too* young men, as the students had been, but young men

who were both boyish and wise, which Alice thought described the professor with utmost accuracy. He was boyish enough to have crisp little wisps of curls above his temples, like a broad-faced boy baby, and wise enough to be writing a book on the Moundbuilders who were a mystery to hoary scholars more than twice his age. And his mustache! A bit more time, a trifle more training, and it would stick straight out in those fascinating points man after man might imitate but only a few achieve.

His face had been close to hers in the hall. His voice had been low in her ear. The candle brackets trembled on the walls of her senses, the naked girl moved from her niche near the dining room door. The balusters danced, the stairs quivered, the hand rail curved across space so that she might reach out and grasp it, but when her fingers started to close upon its support it was not there. Out of a crazy fog she saw the crumpled figure of Great-great-aunt Abigail come tumbling down those stairs, *thump, thump,* and there on the threshold Grandfather Winfield lay huddled against his bride's soft shaking shoulder. Often she had wondered how it had been that her father could have come from those few brief hours of marriage. So much of life was a secret, some other person's secret, that she wavered between curiosity and the fear of knowledge. She had never been able to stand in that hall without knowing wonder and fright, inextricably mingled. She had never heard the college bell without delight and grief

twining within her consciousness as irrevocably as the ivy vines on Winfield Hall. Such was the sum of her experience: terror and joy. Sometimes she felt it to be her own; another moment she recognized it as a heritage: this much was Mamma's, this part Papa's, this specific comprehension the sole sad legacy from her great-grandmother Hannah Wing.

"Will there be room in the woodshed for my bicycle?" the professor said.

Well, why not room for a bicycle, if on the place there was room for every conceivable contrivance of forgotten eras, and even the bones of prehistoric men? The barn was full to bursting with all that had gone before: an ox-yoke, the broken gig, a lamp from a stagecoach, the metal oven-box that had been carried there when Wing Winfield bought the new range. As for the woodshed, within it were only the big kindling box and the great wooden tubs and wash bench, the horsehair sofa from which the students had wrested the back, but which could not go into the barn or ell chamber because for months Wing Winfield had been going to have it repaired tomorrow for certain. And on the floor were the oldest buffalo robes, upon which Flossie Friendly always had her pups: the best robe was in the barn loft, over the cutter seat; buffalo robes cost more now. In Alice's childhood they had been fifty cents, now they were a dollar. Wing Win-

field said the day would come when not a buffalo should be left on the face of the earth. Papa is getting old, Alice thought, and beginning to mourn for the past. He has always lived in the past, and he has always been mourning for something. One should be young while one could and happy while one could. *Professor! Professor!* her heart cried. *Help me be young: help me be happy!*

"There is plenty of room in the woodshed," she said. "It will be nice and dry there, too. I read in the paper that rubber tires should be kept up out of the damp."

"Thank you," the professor said.

He was so friendly, so sincere, and his face was so flushed with finely controlled emotion that she wondered if she ought not to encourage him ever so slightly—ask him to write in her album, for instance. She had had the album several years and so far only two men had happened to set their autographs in it: old Deacon Burt had asked to; his verse read:

"A single wish for thee I'd breathe,
In friendship and in love 'tis given;
On earth a happy destiny,
And then a home in Heaven."

The other male could scarcely be called a man: he was Harry Pratt, fourteen years old, one of her Sunday school

pupils. He also had requested to inscribe himself; in fact, he had suggested exchanging autographs with Miss Winfield. In his she wrote:

"What so e'er you find to do
Do it then with all your might,
Never be a little true
Or a little in the right.
Trifles even lead to Heaven,
Trifles make the life of man,
So in all things,
Great or small things,
Be as thorough as you can!"

And he had splashed all over the page in hers with his big sprawling letters:

"Remember me and bear in mind
A handsome fellow is hard to find."

Oh, the audacity of it! She had cried half the night: boys of that age were so trying and thoughtless and unkind. Plainly her duty led her to bear with their insults and their cruelties and try to mold their lives as well as she might, after the pattern of Christian gentlemen. There were so many good men! But they were all in the Bible

or in history or occupying responsible positions thousands of miles away from the village! As for the village itself, one day, so it seemed, there was a bustling noisy horrid boy like Harry Pratt, and the next he had gone out into the world and was married and making a name for himself in a far-off city. Or he married and settled in the village, usually some little bit of a girl one would think of as half grown, till somebody said she was twenty: how time flew! It was a pity the professors invariably were married before they came to the village: completely married at that. Alice could remember Grandmamma Wainwright's saying that no man in the world was ever as completely married as a professor. Poor Grandmamma Wainwright. She would have approved of the professor, even if she would have been slightly suspicious of him. Long, long ago there had been a young professor by the name of Burke whom Grandmamma had accepted in good faith as a guest in her home. He had been proven a sinful person, almost an unbeliever. The college had had to get rid of him. It was enough to make Grandmamma distrustful of professors. She had had poor health forever after that, and no wonder! She had been deceived, and deceit was the cruelest of transgressions. Alice decided against asking the professor to write in her album. It would involve additional deception of her father and sisters. Her life would be an open book her friends might turn at will

to any unsullied page. Except for the letter to Ruth Ashmore and the professor's bicycle and the sweet unspoken secret of his regard for her. A little later would be soon enough, she thought. Besides, she had never felt the need of requesting an autograph from any man. In her case, she had found, they asked for themselves sooner or later.

BOOK FIVE

IT WAS hard to believe that the woods were gone except for the narrow fringe of beech between the college proper and the gleaming white stadium. It was hard to believe that those fine stone buildings on the eastern rim of the hill were for young women, or that young women should attend the college at all; nowhere in Josiah Winfield's dream had there been a place for young women students, and nowhere in his elegant vocabulary any such word as coeducation. The main building of the Female Seminary had burned and the others had been torn down and hauled away and a filling station stood where their chaste brown fronts had long ago faced the walnut house. With all the smell and racket one seldom bothered to picture in one's mind the slow graceful movements of the forgotten young ladies who had passed there in promenade, their great hoops swaying.

Thirty-three years had passed since the college had opened its doors to young women. They came first in stiff high collars surmounting shirtwaists firmly anchored with *Simmons Automatic Skirt Supporters*. In quiet hours they

wrote letters home, ending with special endearments for baby brothers named *Dewey*. When they wrote the name their minds were certain to recite:

"Oh, *dewy* was the morning upon the first of May,
And *Dewey* was the admiral down in Manila Bay;
Dewy were the Regent's eyes, those eyes of royal blue—
And *do we* feel discouraged? I do not think we do!"

The war was barely over. Aguinaldo was yet to be captured. Over chafing dishes, in rooms with felt banners on the walls and paper stuffed in the keyholes, they sang in illicit whispers:

"Oh, the ecstasy, oh, the bliss,
Ecstasy of the Hobson kiss!"

Not one of them had ever laid eyes on Richmond Pearson Hobson. But they knew other girls who had known other girls who had known girls who had really been kissed by him. Kissed by Hobson! How thrilling! What joy to be kissed by a hero (to be kissed by any man at all!). Their tears of second-hand delight ran down their cheeks and into the Welsh rabbit in place of the stronger liquid nobody would dream of bringing onto the campus. In fact, the village Temperance Society was struggling desperately toward local option. Miss Alice Winfield was the

head of it: she thought the saloon was killing her father's bank, but of course the saloon had been there even before the bank had. She went about with a pocketful of buttons reading *Vote Against Saloons for Me.* She pinned them onto the college girls' shirtwaists, then onto their sweaters, then onto their Eton jackets. Meanwhile, students returning to college for the fall term of 1901 saw the statehouse draped in black as they passed through Columbus. President McKinley was dead.

September and June, Lottie Winfield thought, wondering if the professor would like his eggs poached this morning, just for a little change from the regular three-minute ones. How many Septembers had drifted by since the professor had come to the walnut house? Let—me—see. And here it was June again, with the professor's robe to press: the mean old moths had been at his mortar board again—if she could only persuade his doctor's tassel to lie nice and flat across the path of their migrations! She felt perennially nervous, watching him trudging along in the academic procession. His tassel always bobbed to the wrong side, no matter how many nights she had kept the mortar board in her own room, the tassel weighted beneath two thick volumes on *The Cambrian Rocks: American and European.*

In the village itself, the shops stretched only a little farther along either side of the wide main street. The churches still lifted their spires above the more earthly

elms which even in the hour of utmost growth could neither reach nor overtake them.

The streets were paved and the electric road was gone. It was incredible that it should be gone, but even its tracks were lost in the smooth surface of macadam that spread in place of the mud of Lottie's childhood. Automobiles roared through the village day and night. Mother Shipton had told the truth, Lottie was fond of saying:

"Carriages without horses shall go
And accidents fill the world with woe."

But Alice spoiled everything by recalling the rest of it:

"But the world to an end shall come
In eighteen hundred and eighty-one."

Alice liked to spoil things. She had snooped around and somehow found out about the professor's bicycle before it was even bought. Surely it was she who had told Wing Winfield, who in turn had made Lottie sweep the woodshed to make room for it, so of course there was never anything to do about it after that except push the whole matter behind one of the family silences such as already covered Louanna's poetry and Professor Cavendish, and blotted Amy's name from family conversation.

Habit could keep Amy's name from Lottie's tongue,

but not even time could erase the picture of her from her sister's memory. Impossible to think of Amy growing old; impossible to consider her snatching at any last chance for happiness. But that was what the village said. No girl had ever looked as young as she had that summer, with her hair drawn softly up over one of the stylish wire rolls, and the braid and lilacs and *malines* of her hat perched high on top of it. The village was so excited that it stopped talking about the San Francisco earthquake, and was scarcely aware of Stanford White's murder which happened the very month Amy went away. Still, it was mean of Amy, Lottie thought, not to so much as leave a note for Papa: she should have realized that he was an old man, even if he would have forbidden her going. The next year finished both him and the bank: he had seen panics enough, he said. But as long as he was able he wandered down town every day just the same, leaning on his cane, and talked about Wall Street and Teddy Roosevelt and other depressions he could remember, and what his father had believed in 1837 and what he would have done if he could have lived on over the next five perilous years, and what the New York banks ought to be doing right now to forestall further disaster.

Lottie was glad he had not lived to see the present depression. Not that the village felt it as the big cities surely must, for actually the worst thing about it all as far as *she* could see, was the professor's difficulty in get-

ting his book published. If he had only sent it off years ago, right after the war in Europe, when the firms which desire books of lasting value had money to burn and wanted to issue something besides cheap temporary novels with gaudy covers, and characters with loose morals or none at all. In fact, one company had gone so far as to say: "If we could have seen this ten years ago. . . ."

But ten years ago it had not been finished. Lottie said to the professor: "If it would have been good then, it is all the better today. Ten years have made very little difference to the facts you have set down in it."

"That is true," he said. "Nevertheless, they do not seem to want it. People spoke well enough of my treatises published in 1909 and 1912. The trouble was that neither of them made any money."

"Worse than that," Lottie said. "They cost you quite a lot to have printed. But I have faith in this one. Why, you were twenty years writing it!"

"Longer than that," he said.

Poor man, he must be miserably discouraged. Always he had been the kind to keep his troubles to himself, but time was passing and it was hard to be patient year in and year out. Lottie's heart never lost that quick little skip against her ribs at thought of what was to happen once the professor's book was published. There had been so many delays: the war, and changes in curriculum, and students strutting around in uniforms with *S. A. T. C.*

on the collar. Try as he might the professor could not catch their interest—cocky young creatures with wooden guns, hoping for nothing in the world but that the war would last until they were old enough to go away and learn to be officers! And the flag being yanked up and down in front of Winfield Hall, morning and evening, with bugles blowing and boys whirling around in quick salute, their elbows as stiff as buckwheat batter on a zero morning. And all the ladies with eating clubs were thrown out of business: the boys had to have "mess" in the upstairs of the Ford garage, and what they got was "rations"—good food too, not squares of marble hard-tack like soldiers gnawed at in the war with Spain. After thirty-five years there was still a piece in the Wedgwood tureen; somebody had brought it in the bank and given it to Wing Winfield. Nothing was ever thrown away at the walnut house. Louanna had saved every bit and scrap that might have belonged to Amarila Wing Winfield. Her daughters saved because they had grown up in the shadow of her habit: Wing Winfield's canes stood in the hall-rack though he had died in 1914. His umbrella bulged beside them and his three hats hung above them, faded with dust and time. His granddaughter Amarila hated to have them there when David came to see her. One of them was a plush hat in which wiry black spiders nested. "I simply can't stand it," Amarila told David.

"Why don't you chuck it out?" he said.

They both knew that she would not, if they only partially understood why. But it was hard to be considerate of all the whims of two old ladies who believed one's limbs should be entirely concealed upon every occasion. It was hard to be obedient when one could scarcely escape from the house in less than two petticoats, no matter how carefully one explained that cambric was impossible beneath the current styles and that a starched waistband left one practically *skinned*. It was extremely trying to be continually justifying one's behavior: nice girls *did* appear on the streets without stockings or sleeves; nice girls *could* be seen through in the summer sunlight; nice girls *might* lay a hand on a young man's arm without forthwith consigning their bodies to sin and their spirits to perdition.

2

THERE WERE ninety young men in the graduating class and seven jobs among them. Where were they all to turn with their diplomas in their hands, in a world where experienced workmen stood in relief lines, and men with responsible positions could not collect their salaries, and thousands whose homes had been safe and warm a year ago had now no place to go?

"I would coach, if I could," David said. "After all, I know football better than anything. But school boards are not hiring anybody, if they can help it. They have a hard enough time paying the teachers they already have."

"Yes," Amarila said. "It looks discouraging. The professor said this morning that the faculty has to take another cut."

"It's a wonder they keep *him* on," David said. "But I guess the old boy knows his boulders."

"Poor old soul," Amarila said. "It's a shame, when what he really adores is archeology. You know he has dug into all the mounds around here. But it looks as if the university will never establish a special department for it."

"I guess because they do so much of that over at State," David said. "But golly, if the professor made that as dull as he does geology, no one has missed anything. Sit in his class a whole period and you want to be part of the earth for keeps, that's a fact!"

"He expects," Amarila said, "that sooner or later they will make him professor emeritus. Then he proposes to devote his whole time to his writing."

"I read one of his gems once," David said. "Required reading. There was not a word in it shorter than four syllables."

"Just like he talks," Amarila said. "All *amphibians* and *acrogens*. I don't see how my aunts can stand it."

They walked in the college woods where the beeches

were bright with early summer. Amarila's aunts could remember when there had been more than a grove there; when the forest had stretched on over the hill and down the north side of it and out across the hollow to the road. Louanna Winfield could have stood there and said: *"Here; here; this is the place,"* until her eyes clouded with bewilderment and sorrow. *"No, I am wrong; the path is lost. Time has not marked the way I knew. The trees are gone and the brook is gone, and the sky is too bright above me."*

When the valley was drained in preparation for the stadium, the little stream had vanished. Fraternity houses stood in a row along the west ridge where the president's cows had grazed, their square bells clanging.

In six more days David must go away.

"I shall die," Amarila said.

She knew she would not die, really, but what should she do without him? Last summer the village had seemed as empty as a clean cup that Aunt Lottie had just dried with a well bleached flour sack and set beside its mates on the oilcloth of the kitchen table. And then she had had September to look forward to: he would return in September. Now Septembers could come and go: once David had graduated there was no knowing where he would be in September.

"I'll be back," he said. "I'll be back to take you away

with me, if you won't go now. You might as well come along. Two can starve as cheaply as one."

"No," Amarila said. "We would end up by living off your family. You know what would happen."

He pushed back a branch of an overhanging beech. "I can't leave you here," he said. "That house is like a mausoleum. You'd dry to a handful of mummy-dust. Or the professor would have your bones laid out in a nice shiny row, with labels on them."

Amarila laughed. "David!" she said. "It isn't *that* bad. I've managed this long, haven't I? Aunt Lottie is a darling, if I can be patient with her notions. Aunt Alice is harder to handle: she's *deep.* She's why I made psychology my major."

"Well," David said, "the whole atmosphere is very bad for you. Everything in that house has been dead since the century came in. You belong there entirely by accident."

"It *is* stuffy," Amarila said. "I know that is why Aunt Alice can never keep her rooms rented. The furniture is all so old and dark and oppressive nobody but the professor could possibly stay there. He just doesn't notice. His mind is away off somewhere else all the time, anyway."

She thought with embarrassment of how David himself had tried to room there, to save money, when he was a junior, and of how Aunt Alice kept her lips compressed

through hours of outraged silence, after every night he got in later than half past nine. She thought: maybe it would have been better to have left me in Burma, even if I was an orphan, even if there was nothing for them to do with me but ship me here to the walnut house. Nobody had considered her wishes: indeed she had been an infant at the time. She could not remember the journey, though it had required months of being handed from person to person proceeding on a little farther in the direction of the coast, or to San Francisco, or across the continent to the village which had been her mother's home before she eloped with a ministerial student who was going to Burma as a missionary. Amarila knew nothing of her mother except what she had drunk drop by drop from the uncertain wells of village information. Amy Winfield was an old maid. Her father would not let her have a beau. She sneaked out at night and went walking with students, on top of Sugar Lump or along Lovers' Walk. One of the students had already volunteered as a missionary. He was years younger than Amy. The two disappeared together, and the next thing the village knew (rather than guessed or wondered), they were dead of fever, and strangers had carried their child halfway across the world, back to her grandfather's house. Wing Winfield lay upon his deathbed when she arrived there. He saw her through a haze spotted with pain. He died at a time when the university was prosperous: it dedicated a bronze tablet to his mem-

ory and marked his grave with a fine shaft, only a little less lofty than his father's. The Winfields had had an important part in the history of the institution. Alumni pointed with pride to the walnut house. Its picture had come to be included in the Year Book, as if it were part of the university itself.

And now, for one more time, Commencement Day was almost there. Ninety-five Junes, in happiness and triumph and even in grief, the procession had moved along the wide straight stretch of walk which led from Winfield Hall at one end of the campus, to the tall, towered chapel at the other. Even the road which led to the top of the hill was paved, and some of the students had automobiles of their own, dashing up and down it. The hill was not steep to them: they need not toil along it as James Wainwright had, bearing the can of coal oil which should keep his study lamp burning hour after hour. Nor wrestle with mud and fog as the doctor had, urging his horse through the winter twilight because Rand had slipped among the stones of the quarry. Commencement Day had come in joy and despair: hopeful young men had faced the future strong with the spell of its inspiration and promise. They were educated. The world was ready to open its great kind arms to them. But there had been one youth, Jerome Parrish, who had gone stark crazy right in the middle of the valedictory he was delivering, and had had to be dragged, shrieking and fighting, from the platform. Overwork, the

village called it. And one dreadful noon, with thunder rolling, and not a breath of breeze finding the chapel windows, the president had toppled over beside the table where the diplomas waited with new blue ribbon around them, gasped, prayed with his eyes, and died. A bad day for hearts, the village said.

Alice and Lottie Winfield had sat in the same seats at Commencement so many years that no student felt completely graduated without glancing that way to see that they were present. At first they were a part of tradition; then more and more they became tradition itself, like the ivy the seniors planted at Class Day exercises, and the maples the juniors set in a row like leafy stair-steps down the south side of the hill.

Their hair was only streaked with grey. They pointed out that Papa's had never been white either, though he had lived a long life. Papa had been frail, too, and of a very nervous temperament. If anybody were to have white hair, it should certainly have been Wing Winfield. But it was luxuriant to the last, and almost the same rich beautiful brown. Wing Winfield was handsomer and kinder in the minds of his daughters after they were sixty than he had been in their childhood, even in his best plush hat, even on the days when he bought them new boots and Roman stockings and a bagful of peppermints apiece.

It hurt them to realize that the professor's hair was actu-

ally white, what there was of it, and that his back was stooped from climbing the hill so often, and that he had to lean close to his work to do any reading or writing whatsoever, his eyes were so tired and dim. Why, the professor was *young,* only a year or two older than they were! And in the prime of his intellect as well. It was lamentable that nowadays the college must put up with so many upstarts who somehow or other contrived to get themselves onto the faculty: mere boys with degrees the older men had struggled and scrimped and studied and borrowed to achieve at forty. The professor's first pamphlet was his doctor's thesis; surely they knew how hard he had worked to prepare it. They had missed him dreadfully the summers he had had to go East in its behalf. That was the worst of living in a college town: the summers were a blank from beginning to end, but lately—oh, was it twenty years?—the professor had napped on the porch all through the summer afternoons, going to the post office for his mail around five o'clock, being ready for his supper at half past. So they had not missed the students themselves for ever so long: in fact they were glad to have them gone, so many of them were nothing but a nuisance, pushing and crowding and yelling, and playing such contemptible tricks on Halloween.

They liked to reflect upon the years when students had all been young gentlemen, elegantly dressed, or at least sturdily patched. Nowadays one hardly dared peep out

of the house for fear of seeing a youth in only his underwear or naked from the waist up, shamelessly parading the street. The village had been scandalized at sight of the first cross-country runners, prancing over the fields or down the dusty roads. Even with all the excitement over the new gymnasium, somehow the college had never kept such spectacles properly between its walls. Alice Winfield spoke to the president about it, but he was a young man himself, and of the new order. He murmured polite facts concerning light and air and the accomplishments of the university's track squad: Miss Winfield could of course understand the advantage to the school of excellence in any given endeavor; it was part of the tradition; *so* grateful to have had Miss Winfield drop in. . . .

Amarila was another problem. Surely a girl could dress modestly and still be in style: *they* always had managed to. Even now they felt themselves quite dressy, though nothing like in the years when the bank had been successful. What if they did wear their skirts a few breadths fuller than the rest of the village ladies? The width of a skirt should be one of the matters an individual should decide for herself, according to her personal preferences and proportions: certainly it was nobody's business what they wore so long as it was decent and clean and covered them sufficiently. In their opinion Amarila seldom left the house respectably clad. "Amarila!" Alice would call. "Don't you need a jacket?" "Amarila, where are your

overshoes?" Lottie would say. Even the professor took up the cry. "I see rain in the clouds," he would say. "You will regret denying yourself the protection of an umbrella."

And now in six brief days David was going away. The professors would be arranged in a semicircle on the platform, and in the middle of them the president would spread comfortably against the arms of an oaken throne with a high carved back and a velvet seat like a feather bed. The special chairs next to him were for important men the university would that day make doctors of laws or philosophy or science or humane letters. The professors sat on folding-chairs that rattled and squeaked and had actually capsized in moments of fearful portent: during the invocation; in the twentieth minute of the prayer of a distinguished divine; while a scholar famous on two continents delivered the baccalaureate address.

Lottie Winfield aired and pressed the professor's robe; Alice tidied the front yard flower beds for alumni to tramp upon while they informed one another that the old Winfield mansion was put together with pegs instead of nails; Amarila walked in the college woods with David.

"There's no use for us to talk," she said. "We can't even afford to love each other. Times have never been so hard. There simply isn't any hope for us."

3

LOTTIE SAT down upon the sofa in her bedroom and for the thirty-fifth summer admired the burnt leather pillows tossed upon it in what was supposed to be a position of careless allure. Lottie was most particular about her room: the professor must pass her door as he proceeded down the hall to the head of the staircase. Her bed must be just so, the oil portrait of three horses' heads, black, white and bay, which she had painted in the autumn of 1896, must hang at a precise angle, and the cozy-corner with the sofa and pillows, the tennis racket with the square nose of the nineties, the unplayed banjo and the broken spirit-stove must wait invitingly, straight in line with the door—wait and wait and *wait*. Once the professor had barely stepped in their direction to inquire about the pain in her sprained left ankle; another time he had advanced a few steps farther to say that Flossie Friendly was having a fit, around and around the parlor, frothing at the mouth, and last of all he had come the whole distance to the sofa itself, actually patted Lottie upon the shoulder, and announced that the undertaker was waiting in the dining room: should he bring him upstairs at once and show him where Mr. Winfield was?

It was typical of his dependence upon her that he should turn to her with word like that, instead of to Alice who waxed useless and fluttery in any emergency, fainting away in the moment of her father's last breath, so that there was nothing for Lottie to do but call the professor, shaking him out of a sound sleep in which his mustaches rose and fell with his long whistling snores. He looked so helpless asleep, Lottie thought, turning the years back until she stood beside the black walnut bed, so vast a cavern in the candlelight: "Professor! Professor!" Her pity went out to him now, every morning, when she must coax him from that deep, noisy slumber: "Professor, *Professor*—you will be late to your classes!" "Oh, er—umph," he would reply, as cross as a bear, or a walrus, because his mustaches drooped now; and at breakfast he would complain of how lightly he slept—the least little sound disturbed him! But an alarm clock could not rouse him, and all the morning clatter of the household could not, so there was nothing else to do. A young girl like Amarila could never be trusted in a man's room, and Alice said *she* would not enter it if her life depended upon it, so Lottie had to go, and bear her sister's accusations: "You just make an excuse to get alone with him. You do! He can wake plenty well enough. He says himself he never more than cat-naps!"

At this time of day the professor was in his classroom. When Lottie had entered her room she had shut the door

and locked it with a bolt. Through the window she could see the swallows circling about the barn; now they dipped into the dusky square of open loft window, now they swirled around the corner and up over the weathervane and down behind the apple tree on the other side. In Josiah Winfield's time there had been a young orchard on the west of the land he had purchased to build his house upon. The trees had lived their day: the Seek-no-furthers were gone; there were no more Seek-no-furthers anywhere in the county. The Rambo by the well had snapped and fallen in a thunder storm; the swallows circled through a dying Russet; it might go too, any day. Gnarled humps of rot rose at the base of each branch. Last autumn the leaves had fallen before it was time for apple leaves to fall. This May there had been few blossoms upon it. The swallows swirling through the meager foliage made Lottie think of September. She squatted before the sofa, her knees cracking with little twinges of pain. It was such a comfortable sofa, and looked so inviting! Just the place for a casual tête-à-tête—but nobody ever sat upon it except Amarila who would flop down on *the parlor floor*, if given half a chance.

Under the sofa was a great dark recess as deep as its width. Here Lottie kept her treasures where nobody else might touch them: just let Amarila or Alice so much as lay a finger upon them—well! Here was her pyrography outfit (how the house had reeked of scorching leather!),

here were her pencils and paints in a cardboard box, and the legs of her easel and a number of partly finished objects of art: two small tin coal shovels, lacquered ready for a spray of violets or pansies; a burnt wood tie rack Wing Winfield would have scorned for his stiff black cravats; a forbidden memento of Amy—the tiny pink shoes she had worn the spring of her first birthday. (Wing Winfield had said to throw out her every possession and the last reminder of her treachery, but somehow Alice and Lottie had never done it. Though Amy was a bad, wicked girl. Though they would not speak her name. Though it was mean of her to run off as she did, with a young boy, too—horrible! They hoped she had atoned for it by giving her life for the heathen.)

Lottie felt the familiar objects the sofa hid, smiled a thin smile of satisfaction and drew forth a book and a parcel. She straightened her figure with a sigh, smoothed her skirt, and once again settled herself upon the sofa.

The book was a bound volume of the state geological survey, the year 1888. On its cover had been pasted a pink cut-out rose. Inside, the pages of its statistics were carefully obliterated beneath newspaper and magazine clippings. There were colored flowers everywhere. The first entry was *The Singing in God's-Acre,* by Eugene Field. It had appeared on the front of *The Ladies' Home Journal:*

"Out yonder in the moonlight, wherein God's-Acre lies,
Go angels walking to and fro, singing their lullabies;
Their radiant wings are folded and their eyes are bended low,
As they sing among the beds whereon the flowers delight to grow. . . ."

But no, she could not go on with it. She had pasted it in, but she could never read it, it was so sad. It made her think of Mamma's poetry, and how the flames had licked out and swallowed the curling, shrinking ledger down into the red gulf behind their blazing tongues.

She turned the pages. There was a story, *A Tuneless Lute,* the columns still jagged; Amy had clipped it for her, from the *Ladies Home Companion.* And there was the poem she wanted. Its title was *With Planchette.* It was signed *Analysis,* instead of with the name of an author.

"Come write for me, Planchette. . . ."

Her own planchette seemed to move faster, when she had read the poem. Maybe the words prepared her to receive its message. Alice had scoffed at her pasting the poem in her scrapbook. She said it was wrong; all such things were wrong.

"Planchette, thou tremblest so!
What moved thee to and fro?
Oh, is it I, or thou?

Was't rose leaf from the vase
That softly touched my face?
Are night moths in this place?

And do their restless wings
Make little shadowings
Like faintest pencillings?

Or are they signs which stand
For words in Spiritland,
Which we misunderstand?"

The scrapbook lay face up on the sofa, turned to the place. The parcel was open; the strange board rested on Lottie's lap; the tips of her fingers lightly touched the tiny heart-shaped tripod.

"Planchette, thou tremblest so!"

Yes, there it was, oh, so faint and dim! Y-e-s! She had asked: *does he love me?* Y-e-s! (*Shall we be married soon?*)

One November night she had sat so by the light of

her candle. The wind whirled outside as the swallows did now. *The date, Planchette, the date? And are you sure that he loves me?* But the wind had frightened her. It sounded like Wing Winfield's step, coming up the stairs. The candle flame lay sidewise, on the last words of the poem:

"Goodnight, Planchette, goodnight!
I'll keep this paper white,
And by tomorrow's light

Will search for words I miss,
But let me tell you this:
'Twas not a rose leaf's kiss!"

Something had touched her cheek, light and soft, just as in the poem! Alice! Alice! *Alice! Amarila!* A terrible, terrible dream, but that could not explain the locked door and her wrapper on and her stockings, and her hair not yet decently down nor braided for the night. Of course the professor had not wakened. And she had had sense enough to thrust the disordered parcel back under the sofa. A shame to hide it there, like paint brushes or quilt calico or old, out-of-fashion patterns—the only friend she could tell anything to or expect an answer from, the professor was so busy.

4

THE LONGER Alice Winfield thought about it, the more firmly she was convinced that the time had come for her to take the reins of certain considerations firmly into her own hands.

She never heard the college bell that she was not beset by multiple distresses of the conscience. The older she grew the nearer she felt to Josiah Winfield and her father and to their similar and separate dreams. She saw new buildings rise and heard important men set forth in fine fresh oratory the aims and ideals of the university as they were today. They sounded alien and unfamiliar, as if those men had never heard of the aims and ideals of Josiah Winfield or recognized the sacrifices of his son or noticed her own unfailing loyalty. She felt it unfair that oftener than not the students referred to the walnut house as "the professor's." True, the professor had resided there through two generations of college life, but what was the difference? It was the Winfield house just the same, or should be. Where were the authorities while such misinformation travelled its unheeded way?

She was positive, for one thing, that her father would not have approved of the president. And if Wing Win-

field would not, certainly his father would have been twice as disapproving. Five autumns in a row she had toiled up the hill and demanded as delicately as possible that the family outhouse be unmolested on Halloween. The president would not promise. He was sorry, but Miss Winfield knew how boys were when they got out in a crowd together, enjoying themselves. Now if the offenders were to be identified or apprehended, he might do something. How, in fact, did she know they were students: were there no mischief-makers in the village?

The outhouse was solid and heavy: the first of each November she paid five dollars to have it set back on its foundation. So the deputy marshal came to guard it the next Halloween, and took the precaution of waiting inside it where the boys could not possibly see him. Even the professor was wakened by the later tumult—the outhouse pushed over with the door down, the deputy kicking and howling inside.

That was only one grudge against the president. The others were no less definite. There were the youths in the scanty costumes; there were the football games with automobiles as thick as flies, and twice as dangerous. There were the girls in short pants scarcely below their hips, running around shooting at a mark with bows and arrows.

She had called upon him any number of times, but all she ever got was politeness. Why, yes, of course, Miss Winfield, all the old subjects are taught, the same as ever.

The difference is in the manner of presentation. Among other things, rhetoric is just as important as it used to be, but it is no longer *stressed.* The students would not stand for it. Art is another old favorite which has undergone a change. The decoration of feather-duster handles and coal scuttles and fire screens was out long ago. There is no demand for such accomplishments. But in commercial art. . . .

She was not interested in commercial art. She had learned not to approve of painting and drawing because Wing Winfield considered them an unnecessary waste of time. (Though she could not help thinking the spice box was pretty. Lottie had painted it quite handsomely with opening tulips and waving bluebells. There was a band of gilt around the lid and another an inch from the bottom. They had kept the flower seeds in it since 1890.)

Commercial art was on a plane with football and home economics, a mysterious study dealing with vitamins and calories and efficiency, and absolutely denouncing a good wholesome breakfast of, for instance, fried potatoes and apple pie.

"Oh, no," Amarila said, morning after morning, until the poor professor would push his plate aside with a strange new expression, half bewilderment, half fright. "Oh, no, Aunt Alice—please, just thin toast with my coffee and orange. That's really quite enough."

It was all the president's fault, with his modern notions.

And the village said he said that when the Winfield girls died the old house should be a museum with an *Hours of Admission* placard on the door: *there was nothing to be done but decide upon the hours!*

The trouble was that he had no respect for what had gone before. Just let him try to found a college in a wilderness with wildcats in the woods and fever rising thick as fog, from the newly broken soil! Let him labor night after night by the pale sputtering light of tallow dips, or a home-woven lamp wick, soggy with oil. Grandfather Winfield had! Grandpapa Wainwright had! Papa's friend Rand had, too, and had chopped the wood to warm the room in which he studied. Nothing was fair. The world kept changing; tir.es were hard, but not so hard that the university could not charge two dollars and a half for football tickets. Two dollars and a half!—to see a ball kicked about by boys in bare legs and silk pants—David Payne said the pants were silk!

Since the president would not listen to what she had to say, and since he had replied with no feeling whatever to the letter she sent, there was nothing to do but write him another, perhaps not signing it this time (would that be wrong, when it was for the good of so many people?) and she would tell him the truth, that he was demoralizing the young persons intrusted to his care, that he had denied the first and finest principles of the institution as founded, that (if she could find the courage!) he was a

cheat and a crook and an oppressor of women (that sounded strong, but there were the museum and the outhouse). She would pick it out upon the professor's typewriter the very first time she should be alone in the house, and she would mail it in the county seat right away, when she rode over to pay the summer taxes. It was wrong in a way, but the principle of it was right, and she had tried every other method she knew. And nobody agreed with her. Amarila thought the college was perfect; she would say, "Great-grandfather's dream has come true: wouldn't it be nice if he could see it?" And Lottie said, "Poor Grandfather, and poor, poor Papa. The bank is gone and the college has survived. Well, if Papa had not given it all that money in 1857. . . ."

Both Alice and Lottie were hurt to see the small stone building turned into a delicatessen with ruffled curtains at the windows, and students, girls and boys, emerging with paper pails and sacks full of foolishness destined to ruin their stomachs and complexions. It hurt them worse to see a two-story brick bank built with "big" money, where the saloon had been. They never passed it without a last poignant flutter of the conscience: ladies had never walked that way and they felt daring to do so even now The iron hand of recollection gripped their elbows and hustled them past. The bank's marble steps turned back to straggling boards (oh, how horrid the brown pools of tobacco juice!) and down them at any moment the village

drunkard might come reeling. For always in their childhood there had been a village drunkard, though his name might change from year to year. He could be seen staggering along the streets at nightfall, and Alice's fear of him guided her hands every time she pinned a temperance button onto a little boy's jacket or a young girl's basque. It must be terrible to be a drunkard, shunned by respectable citizens and feared by children. But she was glad, just the same, that Wing Winfield was dead before the new bank was erected. Better the saloon, almost, than a larger, stronger bank in competition with Papa. He would have died at sight of it, of rage or sorrow.

And there was Amarila, making a fool of herself over David. Alice Winfield snorted at the thought of it. She peered with satisfaction back over the years in which she felt she had not made a fool of herself for any man. She agreed with herself that her father had been right: beaux were not essential to a young girl's happiness. She believed herself happier than most married women of her age; she believed that she knew her mind and heart better than those women could possibly know theirs, for having shared them so long; she was not bitter that the professor had been so hurried and confused and busy and weary that somehow the years had slipped by with never a word as to marriage. She understood, and she felt that he was the more aware of her understanding because of the fact that it hung perpetually, a delicate and unuttered bond be-

tween them. There had been no passionate vows, no impetuous promises. And no ridiculous flaunting of herself, day after day, under the professor's reluctant nose—in and out of his room at the slightest excuse: Lottie ought to be ashamed, but she only grew the bolder. Alice could read disapproval in the professor's expression; she pitied him; she saw in his eyes the mute, desperate appeal of the sensitive. Lottie was rude and tactless, especially in the mornings, bursting upon him, snatching him from that last delicious clasp of sleep. And he needed his rest! For forty years he had been telling them how sleep eluded him night after night, time and again, until no living being could comprehend his weariness. Alice caught and cherished the single swift exception in his glance.

As for David, he was a beautiful young man; too good for any girl; too good for Amarila. And Amarila would fawn upon him exactly the same as Lottie upon the professor, with the same adoration lighting her eye, the same possessive radiance in her countenance. Alice had seen it all the semester David had roomed there: it was David *this* and David *that* until the poor boy had turned to her just as the professor did, for counsel and comfort and respite. "Miss Alice," he would say, "Miss Alice—what would *you* do in my predicament? Twenty pages of math., and a French assignment *that* long (waving his arms into space), and not a clean shirt to my name. Now tell me, Miss Alice. . . ."

She was his friend and he trusted her so: he trusted her to know that it was not mathematics nor French nor soiled shirts that troubled him, just as the professor was aware that her sensibility carried her far deeper than his surface complaints as to sleeplessness and the students' dullness, their inattention, and the loss of his notes on *Engineering Feats of Prehistoric Man.*

When David decided he must live elsewhere, his voice had quivered, in the parlor, telling her about it, and she knew that was why he could never trust himself to say more than, "Good evening, Miss Alice," when he came to see Amarila—or was it Amarila? The boy is fond of me, Alice told herself; he has never forgotten; Amarila is only an excuse: he is comforted to know he is near a friend. And she would *be* a friend, in deed as in the heart: duty was stronger than blood; friendship meant more than kinship in some ways, and there was a great deal behind Amarila a conscientious young man might not relish in a wife. Did he know? Should he not be told? She felt it was wrong to leave him in ignorance, though she could not bring herself to tell him the sad dark stories of her own sister and her own mother who were mother and grandmother to Amarila. They seemed like strangers to her now as she reviewed their sins with David in mind, and Amarila seemed the more their daughter since she had enticed a ring from David, with times as hard as they

were, and all such tomfoolery a senseless gesture leading to nothing and signifying less.

She saw Louanna in a frame of fancy, unlike yet actually the ivory and ebon octagon in the old chest with Josiah Winfield's wedding cloak and her father's records in firm brown bundles, tied round and round with corset string. A face, young and grave, with the set expression of all daguerreotypes; an infant on her knee: Amy? Lottie? Herself? It did not matter. Wicked of a woman to bear children to one man and go walking in the woods with another. Her mother, of course, and Alice never knelt at night but that she prayed that wickedness had been forgiven, but wrong was wrong and right was right, nor could one wrong be mended with another: David ought to be warned—Amarila was her own niece, but there was a wild streak in her somewhere. . . . And to think of Amy! But she could not think of what Amy had done: it was too despicable, too base, nor tell David about it; besides she had promised her father she would not speak her name. . . .

She thought of David's eyes and all that she had seen there. He trusted her as a friend and perhaps more than that. She had been reading the truth in the professor's eyes too many years to be mistaken.

One's duty to a friend was stronger than blood. Duty to principle was stronger than pride. When she wrote the

president's letter she would write one to David, leaving it unsigned too, for that would hurt him less. They would be very different letters. They would be difficult to compose. She might feel no happier once she had written them. But at least her duty would be off her troubled mind.

5

THE MOON was high. David and Amarila sat on the grass among the quiet graves. From all directions the night closed in upon them. It was a soft, silent night, such as covers the Middle West in late spring or early June. The stars appeared small and far-off. There was honeysuckle upon the air, and the frail spicy fragrance of bridal wreath. The paths across the campus had been defined by walls of it as they had crossed it an hour ago on their way past the Administration building, past the library, in front of Biology Hall, between the two old dormitories and up the lane.

To the north were fields with wheat and young corn, and rough ragged hillsides, unkempt with blackberry briers and teasel. Only a stray hickory or oak was left, out of all the miles of forest. Behind Winfield Hall was

the thin grove of beeches that was still called the college woods, from habit or in affectionate irony. West of the grove enough of the woods had been left to make shade for the lane: one beech reached out and touched another, lest either should be lonely. Beeches bordered the graveyard and sheltered the weathered stones. Last autumn's split brown burs hid in the lengthening grass.

All of these lay palely anonymous under the lofty moon. A water tower stood to the east of the cemetery, a few rods beyond the fence. Water trickled and dripped from somewhere near the top and ran down over its wooden sides and onto the ground beneath it. The sound had the slow steady rhythm of a waterfall. It was part of the night, yet strangely lost to it. When the water ran hardest (because one hour of the night might be stiller than another) the girl and boy sat listening, and a bird might call out of the darkest refuge of the grove and be answered from a nearer branch. David and Amarila were silent because there was nothing to say, or if there was, they were not quite certain how it ought to be said. One might ask, "Did you hear that bird?" and the other might answer "Yes," but there seemed no use of it. If they tried their voices at all it was to find that they sounded out of pitch and out of place and very far away.

Heavily, within themselves, they sorted the patterns of their separate griefs. Youth, health, love—each part of the intricate burden they only partly understood. Fear.

Loneliness. Insecurity. A larger insecurity, thick as the summer air about them. Weary men stumbling along the roadsides, scrambling in the mornings from fields dank with daisies and early clover, brushing the shreds of last year's haystacks from their shapeless sleeves.

Hard times. Issues that had seemed far-off were suddenly near and terrible, a lump in the throat, a pain above the temple: they were as actual and immediate as that.

"Something has to break," Amarila said. "My aunts would be flat if it weren't for the professor's board money. If I hadn't had to give up college. . . . If I could get a job. . . ."

"There aren't any jobs," David said.

"If *you* could get a job . . ." Amarila said.

"Yes, *if*," David said.

"But you're going away," Amarila said. "I shan't see you any more! You can't see me. Have you looked at it that way?"

"Yes," David said. "*Yes, yes, yes!* It looks as if we're the generation that's getting left out. It seems as if the world hasn't any place for us."

The moon was a white eye looking down. It set the granite shafts apart, the one from the other; the soft-marble slabs took back the half nebulous shapes of daytime. There was not enough light to reveal the crude sleeping lamb on Deborah Wainwright's small quaint marker.

"I guess we don't know about the other depressions," Amarila said.

"I guess not," David said.

"My aunts get to talking," Amarila said.

"Yes," David said.

"They noticed such things more," Amarila said, "with the bank in the family."

"Of course," David said.

"I wish you had a job," Amarila repeated.

Once more the night was still except for the birds calling in the darkness and the slow *drip, drip* of water from the tank. The summer's first insects hummed in the close hot shade. There are hours in which love comes to mean more than any sorrow, mortal or financial: a few tears slid down Amarila's cheeks; David wiped them away. They wished vaguely, incoherently, that they might have been young together in a forgotten age or in a strange new age to come, then this gladness, this wistful misery, would have been long over or not yet ready to begin. But there was no use wishing. Better to have it so, they thought, enumerating their hopes, repeating in their hearts the sane optimistic creed a nation had repeated through months of terror and despair: *Times are going to get better. There isn't anything to worry about. Why, business has to get better! It can't possibly get any worse!*

"The Commencement crowd isn't going to be worth counting," Amarila said. "After Aunt Alice cleaned the

spare room, thinking she could rent it. A few years ago the alumni would fill every room in town."

"People can't even come to see their children graduate," David said. "My parents can't; they can't afford it. And they had planned for years—just about ever since I was born."

"You'll surely get a job," Amarila said. "Look how important you've been in college. On the team, and prominent in your class. Look at all the publicity you got out of those long end runs. Look at what your touchdown did Thanksgiving!"

"Yes, *look,*" David said. "I'll be looking and looking and looking. The time has gone by when those things matter very much."

They rose and moved slowly about in the night. To the south the library tower cut a grey gulley in the lighter sky. Winfield Hall was a vast black blotch with corners and angles. The Big Dipper, angled also, hung above it. The Milky Way spread like a path across the eternal campus of the heavens. None of the stars was lit with the ripe gold of fuller summer. They had a young and fragile look. The boy and girl stepped softly among the flattened graves.

"Great-grandfather Winfield," Amarila said, "was a philanthropist and an egoist and a sensualist and a fashion plate—for men only. But he was a scholar too. I'd like to have known him."

"Darn' dirty deal he got at the end," David said. "What about his son?"

"He must have been horrid," Amarila said. "It wasn't his fault. Psychiatry came too late to do him any good." She stooped before a narrow, old-fashioned stone. "This was his friend," she said. "Give me a match—*Elias Rand, March 1, 1834, February 19, 1857.* Twenty-two, wasn't he? I always imagined it was he my grandmother loved instead of my grandfather. There was something queer about it. . . . Well, here *she* lies, over here."

Matches flickered and flared. The stone was clean and white. Moss grew about its base, but the thin deep script was distinct: *Erected to the memory of Louanna, wife of Wing Winfield. Departed this life November 27, 1878.* There was a slim marble hand, pointing toward Heaven.

"He might have said *beloved* wife," David said. "It would have sounded politer."

"There was a scandal," Amarila said. "Involving a professor of English. Probably very mild, but you know how things were in those days."

Beside the larger stone was a tiny one. The legend was lost in lichens. Amarila read it from her mind. *Infant Winfield, ætat seven days. November 28, 1878.*

"It appears," David said, "that he partially forgave her."

Over their heads a mail plane roared. High over the hilltop and the towers, and the weatherbeaten house

where all the presidents had lived, and over what was left of the college woods.

"She died of lockjaw," Amarila said. "She and the baby. The night it was born the doctor's horse had got down in the stable, and he had been working with him half the night when he was sent for for Grandmother. He hurried straight from there."

"God!" David said.

The darkness turned still again. The honeysuckle seemed sweeter where they stood. Only their aching hearts broke the peace which surrounded them.

"Maybe this is the last time we can walk here," Amarila said. "Together, I mean."

"Maybe," David said.

"It will be all right if you get a job," Amarila said.

She wanted to encourage him, but there was the memory of the stumbling men, and of a motion picture she had seen in the winter: boys swinging on and off freight cars, sometimes being hurled beneath the spinning wheels. It was incredible that David might ever be one of them—but what happened to strong young men with nothing to do? She looked into the years of earlier depressions as her aunts had recounted them: there had been forests to hew away and fields to till and animals to be looked after. She peered into the soundless gloom beyond the beeches. . . . Well, there still were fields, if that was any comfort. They stretched over the hills and along the road which led to

the north out of the village, and barns and silos and corn-cribs would be filled from their yield: the immediate hill-side would be mottled with blackberries; she had gone with Aunt Lottie to gather them for jelly, in the far, impossible summers when she had romped among the graves and over the fence, her bucket swaying. *"Amarila!"* Aunt Lottie would say. "Have more respect for the dead! That was Professor Parkman's grave you trod upon. Look out, now! Behave!"

Professor Parkman and Professor Sitwell and Professor Blose and Professor Macmillan: there they slept beside their wives and their inevitable infants; under the summer moon as under the frost and snow, showers of October beechnuts or April rain. Hail, sleet and sun assailed them, through sundry covers of earth and periwinkle and love-entangled. Jane Wainwright lay a little apart from her husband, as she had striven to lie in life. *James Wainwright, Professor of Philosophy, 1837-1876, Dean of the University, 1860-1879.* Mosses concealed the dates of his birth and death and the long Latin sentences of his reward.

"Poor old boy," Amarila said.

She caught her breath to say more, but the words would not come. She had an idea that they would not mean very much if they did. She thought of her mother, whom her aunts would not mention, but for which they made up by talking too much about everybody else. She thought of

the walnut house and of how before long she must tiptoe into it, creeping along the hall and up the stairs, measuring her steps by the professor's weird, querulous snores.

"I love you, I love you," David said, knowing that love meant less because times were so hard, when, if ever, it ought to mean more.

They turned from the graves to the lane and the campus, where pigeons sobbed in their sleep from the high wooden belfry where they nested. There were few lights in the village; the hills huddled darkly around it. From the rocky slope of Old Posey Pot new lambs cried faintly, the sound almost lost in crossing the valley. Her hand tight in David's, Amarila tried to devise a quick history of the village. She had heard it often enough: it nurtured its children on sentiment and tradition. Great trees, bearded men, rough cabins, tedious prayers, oxen picking their way through mud or over the grassy roads. . . . Amarila felt that she would have feared them. She imagined her great-grandfathers, serious men, gazing into the future as wistfully as she stared into the past. Her dreamy hindsight only half revealed them. Wing Winfield was nearer and clearer, through her aunts' sharp, penetrating recollections. He walked in her mind as he must have walked along the streets of the village, proud and sensitive and aloof, misunderstanding as he was misunderstood. Occasionally his wife stepped daintily beside him; not very often; as if she had some private pleasure she

would rather turn to in the interval of his absence, something entirely her own and apart from him, as light and laughter and joy are forever apart from death.

"Well, here we are," David said. "Goodnight. See you tomorrow, Amarila."

His kiss hurt her mouth. Aunt Alice's sweet peas were white dots in the moonlight. Amarila wished that she need not enter the walnut house.

"Goodnight, David," she said, clinging to him.

6

"SOMEBODY HAS been tampering with my typewriter," the professor said.

"Not I," Amarila said.

"I might have just barely touched it," Lottie said. "When I dusted. But I'm always extra careful."

"The keys were jammed," the professor said severely, peering over the tops of his glasses. "And something was done to the place where the ribbon goes through. I am not of a mechanical turn of mind, and shall doubtless be forced to call in a professional repairman. There is none in the village; I must get one from the county seat."

"Maybe it will fix itself," Alice said. "Machines some-

times do, don't they? If a human can get over an ailment without doctoring, why can't a contraption like a typewriter?"

"Aunt Alice!" Amarila said.

"I was trying to help the professor to feel better," Alice said. "It may not be as bad as it seems. Professor, have some more coffee."

"No," the professor said. "I am too troubled to enjoy my breakfast. I had an important letter to write, and now my typewriter is broken. A business letter. I have been tendered an offer on my book."

"Oh!" Lottie said, clasping her hands to her breast. "Oh, Professor!"

"A *good* offer," the professor said.

"What is it, Aunt Alice?" Amarila said. "Aunt Alice, what *is* it? Here, take a sip of water."

The professor began fanning the air with his napkin.

"I'm all right," Alice said. "The morning is warm, isn't it? Never mind, Amarila; eat your porridge."

"I can't," Amarila said. "Fruit is enough, honestly."

"I intend to accept it," the professor said. "I shall at last feel enabled to undertake an enterprise dear to my heart—something unfortunately postponed fully forty years."

"I do feel a bit faint," Alice said, rising. "If you will excuse me, I think I shall step out on the porch a minute."

"Excuse me, too," the professor said. "Busy. . . . Busy. . . . My work, you know."

But he went toward the barn instead of upstairs. In a little while he trudged back, around the corner of the house and down the street toward town.

"He has his tools!" Amarila said. "I'll bet he's headed for The Crocodile."

"But his letter!" Lottie said.

"I declare, it is warm," Alice said, coming back into the room. "Sticky heat. It's no cooler outside than in here."

"He forgets," Amarila said.

Oh, not *this* letter! Lottie said without speaking. Not a letter that holds as much meaning as this one—not after waiting and *waiting*. But there he went, down the street with his tools; Amarila was right: there was no place to go but The Crocodile, in that direction and with his shovel and mattock.

"Commencement Week, too," Amarila said. "He ought not to go wandering off like that, with alumni back who might want to see him. He ought to be right on the hill, in his office where he belongs. Besides, starting off with those tools he looks like a gardener, ready to hoe his beans and potatoes."

"It doesn't matter," Lottie said. "Everybody for miles around knows the professor. And people all know how he

feels about The Crocodile. He's been digging at it off and on ever since the first day he came here."

Alice thought: *let him go, let him go;* he certainly need not bother about the alumni. As far as she could remember she had never seen so few return. She wished that she had saved the effort of cleaning the spare room for them. She had never been able to get carpet back down decently since Professor Walsh had borrowed the Excelsior Carpet Stretcher and kept it.

7

LOTTIE WINFIELD toiled up the hot south slope of The Crocodile. Her legs had almost failed her, coming across the short cut over the golf course: she had had to sit down on a bench on one of those grassy raised places with queer metal arrows pointing in no sensible direction, and silly green buckets of sand. She was glad to walk on the golf course because the grass was shorter, though one would have thought they would clear it *all* instead of leaving thick deep patches of woods between the wide smooth expanses that were like the finest lawns in the village. She sighed with regret at thought of the lawn at home, the fences in need of repair, the mutilated iron deer whose

antlers were known to adorn the wall of the Beta Sig house. Papa had been proud of that deer, and she remembered, in the close noon heat, how proud she had been of Papa, in especial one April day years and years ago, riding along the road now in sight to the south of her, the new bays at a crisp flowing trot, the whip new too, with a yellow tassel and shining black handle.

The mill pond was part of the golf course now, an oval of clipped bright grass, drained and dry. Nobody could imagine Miss Sarah Matthews sobbing there, wringing her hands in the night, pacing back and forth under the trailing willows. A thin fringe of locusts still stood, over along where the race had been; the great weeping willows had vanished. In her mind Lottie heard the frogs from the pond, a long low *r-r-r-r-r* in the dark, then the deep bass *boom* of a bullfrog. Amy slept in Mamma's lap; the reins smacked gently on the backs of the bays; they must pull the steep hill into the village.

No, no, no, her heart said, bidding her feet struggle onward up the hill. Her straw hat sat stiffly on her thick knot of hair. Perspiration gathered before her eyes, making her see through a film. She wiped the wet lids, the thin lashes, the lens of her glasses. One heel caught in a snake hole, and a plantain-spike snared the other shoestring. The hillside was white with daisies, lovely to see, but sticky and rough against her skirt, snatching at it and dragging her into the crueler clutch of raspberry brambles

and wild rose briers. She stumbled on stones that hid beneath the grass.

Almost to the top she came to a fence. The Crocodile is less in itself a hill than the extremity of a ridge that winds northward and east in rough parallel to the ridge on which the college stands. To its west are sparse woods and the ruins of an orchard. Lottie pressed forward through these and a hole in the fence. She came out upon the crest of the ridge and moved upon high flat uneven ground directly east toward the actual effigy of the crocodile.

She had never been nearer to it than the road between the county seat and the village. It was never a place for picnics, like Mount Colossus and Sugar Lump; it was farther from the village, and, in her girlhood, snakes were presumed to abound upon it. Later on, steers had been turned there to pasture; she would have been afraid of them, even if her father had permitted her going. There was really no reason for her to go anywhere near The Crocodile, except that the professor was forever talking about it and drawing diagrams of it and covering pages of paper with calculations regarding it. But here she was. She was not sure that she saw what she had expected to see. A gnarled gaunt chestnut, long humps of earth beneath it—this might be its head, toward the west (the professor had said it was toward the west), and this a

leg, and this . . . the tail, curving in the sunlight, tapering to nothing. . . .

Red spots leaped before the sun. Red spots danced on the mullein leaves and the meadowlarks' wings and hid the nodding daisies. They sizzled upon the professor's spade, resting against the tree.

Oh yes, Lottie thought: now I know what I have come here for; it was about the letter and the professor and his getting his book published. I wanted to see him by himself—Alice stays so close: I wonder what has got into her this summer.

She stuffed her hat with burdock leaves, the sun was so hot, and straightened herself and listened. . . . Perhaps the professor had stepped off for a minute into the bushes, since he had left his spade (or rather her father's spade); surely he had not gone far. Ought she to clear her throat or attempt a sneeze, or cough ever so discreetly?

The day spread blue and gold about her. Within the green cleft of the hills the village drowsed, the church spires pointing toward the sun. Gently the college buildings rose from their bed of maples. The chapel steeple seemed to touch the sky. Far down on the road, automobiles moved to and fro, like queer scuttling insects. Near by them, she knew, the roar was terrific, reverberating from the enclosing hills. But from this distance, this

height, it was nothing. Not half so clear or half so loud as a bobwhite's call, ascending sweet and strong from the blossoming slope or the clean green valley below.

But where was the professor? Oh, she had waited so long and the years were so bare, in spite of Planchette's reassurance! This morning, just at dawn, a cool wind had crept out of the south and over the hot sloping roof of the ell and into her open window, across the bed where she lay and onto her outthrust arms. It had reminded her of something: funny she could not remember—the sun was so hot and her eyes so tired, no vision came but a strange fanciful one of Amy as she had never seen her, in white, with a cork helmet on, beaming upon a crowd of lean brown barefoot people.

For the thousandth time she regarded her sister's act with shocked surprise. Amy need never have thought she was the only one! Plenty of other girls had been loved and in love, respectably and in their own homes too, without traipsing off to foreign countries. Which way was Burma, she wondered absently: east, west, straight through down under the earth?

It seemed a romantic end, too nearly a reward, for running away from home. She had supposed that only a bitter fate awaited behavior so wanton. From the meager resources of her youth (warnings, poems, pictures) she had evolved grim destinations for a runaway girl: dingy doorways, bleak rooms, beds without cover, villains with-

out mercy, grief worse than death. Somehow it was easier to think of Amy like that than to picture her beside her missionary husband, happy and smiling and busy as she must have been six whole years, ministering to the heathen.

That was a different way of looking at it. For years the thought of Amy had sent a song skimming through her head. It made her think of the professor too, in his bicycle suit with the single-breasted jacket and buttoned knees:

"She is more to to be pitied than censured,
She is more to be helped than despised;
She is only a lassie who ventured
On life's stormy path, ill-advised;
Do not scorn her with words fierce and bitter,
Do not laugh at her shame and downfall,
For a moment just stop and consider
That a man was the cause of it all."

"Oh, pshaw!" Lottie said, not knowing she said it. The professor had worn that suit till it was not fit for carpet rags. Amy had boldly threatened to sneak it out of his room and into the rag bag—his Alpine hat with the limp feather along with it! Amy made fun of the professor behind his back and then one August dusk they had been seen strolling down off Sugar Lump together! Could it just have *happened?* Amy coolly remarked that

she had sought higher ground for a breath of moving air. Well! Humph! That was the summer the professor was working on Sugar Lump, trying to make out that the Moundbuilders had had something to do with that!

What a muddle life was: so confused; so vexatious! Here she had come all this distance, with the sun as hot as an overstoked base-burner, and now she did not feel in the least like a nice leisurely chat with the professor (as she had planned it while she washed the dishes), sitting close together under cool hovering shade, their future spread before them, their thirst quenched by cold water from the thermos jug she had carried the whole long blazing way.

He should have come back by now. But there were thickets down the hillside, and trees over beyond the end of the crocodile's tail. Could he be taking a noonday nap as he did sometimes at the walnut house? (Too often, since it was such a job to wake him!)

She would call softly "Yoo-hoo!" and then louder, "Yoo-hoo, yoo-hoo, *yoo*-hoo!" Surely those bushes moved. She should have gone straight there in the first place, along the curved length of the crocodile, past that thick clump of sumac in a round grassy hollow beneath the broad sweep of the hill. Yes, there was certainly a movement, under the thick drooping leaves. "Yoo-hoo, Professor!" Lottie said.

"Why, Lottie!" Alice said, scrambling up out of her seat in the grass.

"Alice!" Lottie said. "How on earth did you get here?"

"I came on the bus, down the road to that house," Alice said, waving an arm to the south. "Then I walked through that field—the one with the hedges."

"Spying after me!" Lottie said. The chestnut staggered against the sky. Some old crows flapped from its bare top branches. "I thought you felt faint! You *said* you did! You ought never to be out here in this hot sun!"

"You followed *me!*" Alice said.

"Miss Lottie," the professor said, "can that be water you have brought along? I was never so thirsty."

Yes, she had walked and carried him water to drink, while Alice rode in the big comfortable bus, empty handed. Gratitude glowed in his eyes: or was it only a reflection from the parched, sunburned hilltop? His face was so red a fresh frantic fear burst within her breast, scattered her senses. *The professor was old enough to die!* She and Alice were old enough too! She wondered vaguely what she ought to do next, as if this minute were an age away from the one before it. But there they stood on top of the hill, the thermos jug tipped over its own gleaming cap in the professor's hand, the water gurgling, rippling, rushing. . . .

"Ah," the professor said. "Ah."

"You were telling me," Alice said, "about this strange figure before us. Please continue, Professor, since I have come so far to see it."

"And I too!" Lottie said, sinking to the tufted ground.

"This is an effigy mound," the professor said. "There are three kinds of mounds, effigy, signal and defensive. Some authorities name the altar mounds as a separate class. This mound is probably both effigy and altar. There were thousands of mounds erected in this state, of which only a few have been adequately explored. Some have been plowed over, and others have been lost with the building of cities upon them."

"Well," Alice said.

"Do go on," Lottie said, wiping her forehead with her handkerchief.

"It is my intention," the professor said, "that not another one of them shall be sacrificed to time or greed or unlawful curiosity."

Alice opened her mouth, then closed it so tightly there was a rim of white where her lips had been.

"What can you do, Professor?" Lottie said.

He folded his arms on his chest; the wind stirred his thin hair and whipped his long mustaches. Among the weeds upon the crocodile's wide back he tapped a caressing foot.

"Did I not tell you about my book?" he said. "An offer from New York—a well-known publisher. . . ."

He snatched up the mattock in both hands, and the dust flew from a narrow trench against the side of the crocodile. Sod stood in a neat pile against the tree.

"You do not understand," he said. "Women are like that—dull. They lack perception. And so do students, women and men. I see it every day."

He bent again to his task.

"I shall never," he said, "have quite enough of digging."

8

COMMENCEMENT DAY! The college bell rang in the morning, so visitors could say: "Good old bell! Listen, Sonny—that's the bell Dad went to college by!" What few visitors there were. But there was the old excitement on even the first humid breath of the June day. Alice felt it, twisting her long rope of hair into a knot that was darker than her pompadour, dragging down the creaking stairs to put the coffee on. Lottie felt it, and rubbed her sore muscles wearily. The hill had been so high! Well, thank fortune, the professor's robe was ready. He always had to be caught and coaxed into it, like a little boy into patent-leathers. (Come to think of it, she had not seen

a pair for ever so long, and nothing looked as dressy!) If only the professor's tassel would cover the moth holes on his mortar board! She did not care *where* it was really supposed to lie.

And how very peculiarly he had behaved yesterday on the hilltop. But who could blame him, with Alice pouncing upon him as she must have, right in the middle of his labor, and persuading him (no one could imagine how) to come and sit in the thicket with her? He had been so embarrassed he hardly knew what he was saying. Still, from the look of relief in his face, Lottie could tell he had been hoping *she* would come. It was a shame to have their meeting completely spoiled. Alice was always spoiling things, however carefully one planned them. And that ridiculous talk about his money and the Moundbuilders! One other time, before Alice, he had spoken of the same silly scheme. Some sort of a foundation he meant to establish for the protection and investigation of mounds. But "dear to my heart" he had said yesterday at breakfast! Could mounds be "dear" even to the professor's heart—mere bumps of dirt and pennyroyal and snakewort that they were? She wondered. No, that was his way of putting things, of keeping their secret fresh and pure until the last sweet day. She covered her eyes with her hands, her fingers spread so a pink light sifted through them. Today he would march in the procession: another Commence-

ment, another year; and June only just beginning! She must be ready to attend the exercises and to see him step firmly along in the garments she had prepared for him. Oh, how her heart would beat, while he looked neither to right nor left but straight ahead at the collar of the professor before him, or maybe on beyond that, to where the ivy hung strong and dark against the mellow red front of Winfield Hall.

But she must hurry. She could smell the coffee. Her legs hurt so, she believed she could never climb the hill in time for the ivy planting, though it was a most beautiful ceremony and she had not missed it in years. *Planted by the Class of 1933!* How time sped by! But this would be a busy morning, breakfast, and the dishes, and getting the professor off on time—somehow there seemed so much more to do than other years.

"Well, I intend to go!" Alice said. "I think it only *decent,* with David in the graduating class. As often as he's been to call on Amarila."

"My robe, my robe!" the professor said, just as he always said it. "This hat won't stay on my head. It tips! Look, Miss Lottie—see?"

"Oh, it's only because you don't like to wear it," she said. "Now go on, Professor. Yes, yes; it's all right."

"My letter!" he said. "I must mail my letter!"

"Is your typewriter fixed?" Amarila said.

"My typewriter?" he said. "Why, it is perfectly good. After thirty years of service. No trouble at all. . . . Well, yes; I guess it did stick yesterday."

Once they were gone Lottie thought: he will be tired by supper time. Maybe I might just beat up a chocolate cake—he likes that, and it would be a treat. If I hustle I can get it out of the way and still be there by eleven. I can hide it from Alice; she would call it a waste of sugar—just because she never has any luck with dark cake.

And while the sprig of ivy was patted firmly into the warm soil by the new white stone, Alice decided that if she could get Lottie out of the house this afternoon on any possible pretext, she would bake apple pie for the professor's supper. He really appeared to relish it more than anything, though she did hope this would not be one of the times when he shouted, "Flint! Flint! My new piece of flint! I had forgotten!" and rushed from the table without dessert. He was perpetually forgetting a new piece of flint or a bone or a stone or a bit of beaten copper; maybe it was left on the window sill in his office, maybe he had laid it down in chapel, maybe he had no idea where it was. But he never could rest until it was in his hands again and he had examined it, and set down a record of his findings.

The campus had never been so lovely. The bridal wreath was usually gone by now, but spring had been late and its blooming delayed; from a little distance one could not tell that some of the flowers were turning brown with

summer. Showers of white petals fell to the gravel driveways; squirrels scampered here and there; pigeons fluttered from the belfry, fretted in the grass, and rose together as one mottled wing, up through the maples and into the belfry again.

There was a day when Alice had climbed to this hilltop with her mother, and had stood looking out over the valley to the circle of dark blue hills. . . . There was a day she had stood here with her grandfather Wainwright. . . . Far to the south, beyond Old Posey Pot, lightning had skimmed in a long zigzag from the top of the sky to the arch of the hill. . . . She saw herself in magenta merino with triple rows of black silk braid; her grandfather in vague, unpressed brown woolen, a soiled tall white collar, a large black neck-cloth. . . . And there was her mother's voice, like a little gold bell: "See the white clouds, my darling, my love! Remember them some moment when there is no beauty. Remember them for me, and be at peace."

Those minutes came back too rarely for consideration. Alice thought: that was before she did wrong. She was a good woman then; it was right for me to love her.

A tear slid down like a last dim gesture of doubt. Faith, truth, wrong, right: what did she know of any of them? But duty was a simpler word. The procession was forming. Had the president received his letter? Had David received his? But there was no reason why they should not have:

both were sealed and stamped and carefully addressed; each had had ample time to reach its destination.

She flushed with aggravation, thinking of yesterday. Lottie was selfish and trying: they had been so *happy* together when they were little girls, but since they were grown and with other things on their minds. . . . It would be different now the professor's book was to be published. A book always meant a tremendous amount of money, especially a deep, authentic, important book such as the professor's must surely be, after twenty years' hard work. Now they would take a trip together, the professor and herself, and they would visit those marvelous gardens, all fountains and terraces and marble urns, he had seen that time in his earlier travels. One summer dusk by the pump, while she was filling the watering can for the touch-me-nots, he had said all of a sudden, without prompting or warning: "I wish you could see the flowers I saw. In Italy—er, well, they were wonderful." And of course he had never forgotten: he might forget small, insignificant things—it was mean of Amarila to make fun of him. "Absent-minded," she called him, but just because he was a professor and that was an old joke (Amarila had explained that it was), rendered it neither the kinder nor the truer. She had got on the bus and ascended The Crocodile wholly because of that evening. There came a time at last when all men needed encouragement. Just a word, a nod, a hint of womanly approbation. She was prepared

to give it. And she had felt terribly about his typewriter. She had been as careful as could be, using only a forefinger, and scowling over the keys in the shadowy corner where he kept it. But it was so old and stiff, and she feared that that rust upon it was from where the roof leaked. . . .

Never since that snowy morning when Mary had shaken her awake and said bluntly, "Get up, Alice; your mamma is dead," had she felt so small and so lost and so utterly alone. Young men and women dashed across the grass, their black gowns flapping; everybody was shaking hands or kissing or waving across the campus to somebody else who waved in glad return. The squirrels dashed from tree to tree. Robins ran forward, their heads cocked sidewise, then up they rose with a flash and a rustle. The clouds rolled thick and white on the broad bright sky. Across the village there must be lambs grazing and bleating on the side of Old Posey Pot; there had been that day she had walked with Mamma. But her eyes could not see and her ears could not hear—it *was* a long distance! So few alumni were back scarcely anybody greeted her or shook her hand. She had thought perhaps she might meet some of the boys who had boarded at the walnut house: what nice boys they were, but heedless and mischievous. She had shaken hands with one of them here last year: his son was graduating. His youngest son! There was no use of expecting to see him now.

"Upon this selfsame hill
Proudly our fathers stood;
Beneath this sky their songs rang out
O'er valley, field and wood.

Courage and strength were theirs,
Their labor gladly given
That we might march with lighter steps
Toward wisdom, and toward Heaven. . . ."

The college hymn! Here they came! And the tears came too, because so many others marched in the shadows, hid in the bare windy corridors of Winfield Hall, rested their elbows upon the worn stone sills of its open windows and leaned out, watching. Papa and Grandpapa and Grandfather Winfield, and Papa's friend who had been killed in the quarry: young men with Boz locks, with sideburns, with full flowing beards, with "handlebar" mustaches. And certain students: Ben Lively, who had sung deep bass at the minstrel shows (the quiver of the Town Hall curtain, the strange gay foreign mystery of the scene painted upon it, *The Lagunes, Venice:* fishing craft with poles and queer sails, birds shaped like swallows but larger; yellow sky; extraordinary water—half dreams, half soiled battered canvas heaving unevenly upward—trousers legs, gleaming waistcoats, black faces and at last Ben Lively:

"Rufus Rastus Johnson Brown
What you going to do when the rent comes round?")

"Home-run" Denny, who had captained two baseball teams. Killed in the great war. . . .

That fat, light-haired sophomore, whose skull was crushed in a fall from the flagpole. . . .

"Preacher" Mitchell, who failed in Greek, slashed his wrists and lay down on the railroad track. . . .

The column came forward with short, unhurried steps. Alice broke off a small spray of bridal wreath and pushed it into her hair. Should she pretend not to notice the professor, or just let her fingers flutter the least bit? It was hard to decide. And where was Lottie? She should have come along: it was everyone's duty, especially a Winfield's, to be present at Commencement. Some of the crowd had already moved into the chapel, but it was nicer to be out here: there would be plenty of seats; she would go in in a minute, after the procession had passed. She wanted to see the look on the president's face, up close, as he walked along. She knew she would blush when he came abreast of her, but how could he guess? How could he know? There was no possible way he could connect her with the letter. Yet, oh, if she had never sent it! But she was justified; it was her duty. And David. David. Doubtless he would never speak to Amarila again. Then

she would get over mooning around, and go to the county seat or Columbus and get a job, since she didn't have the money to finish college. Times were hard, but there *were* jobs. That was only an excuse toward marrying David, throwing the whole burden upon him, poor boy. *(Oh, what if Amarila should get a job in Columbus? Stay, stay beside us, Amarila—do not go away!)*

Truly she had been expecting to hear of something happening to the president. Death, sudden illness—it was hard to guess what. So many things could happen when a man was suddenly shown himself in his real light. But there he came. The sun lay bright on the stripes on the full sleeves of his robe. He chatted and laughed with the man beside him—that was *brass* if anything was!

The breeze was cooler. That thickness in the breast was gone. How light and free the spirit seemed to soar! Commencement Day! Well, I have loved it, Alice thought, ever since I was a little girl.

There was the professor, solemnly advancing beneath the *flop, flop* of the tassel. *Shall* I wave? Where on earth is my handkerchief? But there was Lottie, scarlet and short of breath, slipping a hand through her elbow. Botheration! Still, it would be nice for them to enter the chapel together. The Winfields ought to sit together. It looked better, and set an excellent example. Tradition was dying out, no matter what was said. Where was Amarila? She must go in with them. She must sit between them. They must take care of Amarila.

Alice spied her, a little distance away, her cheek like a peach's cheek in the sun, her hair falling away from the part exactly as her mother's had. No, Alice told herself: I will not think of Amy. *I will not!* So she tugged at Lottie. "Come on," she said. "We must get Amarila. Or she will go and sit with *boys*. Those fraternity friends of David's."

They pushed their way to a place behind her. Alice reached out to catch her round bare arm.

From the procession a youth had fixed his gaze on Amarila. How he looked! Alice frowned at him. But it was David in his cap and gown!

"See you later," he said, out of the side of his mouth. His fingers lightly brushed Amarila's. "Meet you on the steps—*Sweetness!*" He marched on.

"Hello, Aunts," Amarila said.

"Did you see the professor?" Lottie said. "Didn't he look *distinguished?*"

One could but do one's best, Alice thought, whatever happened. She had tried, yesterday and today, this whole week, all her life. And she was not certain that she had accomplished anything, or, if she had, precisely what it was. Misunderstanding and sorrow and pain, error and broken love, what were they all but the bread and water of life, from which hope was built and accomplishment recorded? She supposed, after all, Josiah Winfield would have liked the university just as it stood today. It *was* impressive, with the rows of great buildings and the big

white stadium and the long double file of faculty and graduates. Times *were* hard; maybe she had been wrong in adding even a dozen lines to the president's burden. She thought of other presidents, asleep beyond Winfield Hall: maybe after the exercises she and Lottie would step over there and see the flowers on the graves. They were the same every year: daisies and June roses, blue flag and syringa; the blossoms of that season. She *would* think of Amy, just this minute, this once, in spite of Papa,—a fat pink baby at home in the worn old cradle, and she would think of Mamma, a little weak and frail, holding her own hot hand in her cool dainty white one, half covered with its crocheted mitt. They had stood just here, Lottie and herself, in hoopskirts nearly as wide as Mamma's. There marched Grandpapa Wainwright, at the very front, (they could hardly keep from dancing) and there was Aunt Rebecca on the other side of Lottie, a tiny grey shawl beneath her small grey bonnet.

Shuffle, shuffle, shuffle, went the boot soles on the gravel walk. *Click, click, click,* shoes kept step on the cement.

"Yes," Alice said, "I thought he looked nice. A mustache is a change from so many plain faces. My-*oh!*—two hundred graduates! What will they ever do in these hard times?"

The procession moved slowly along the top of the hill.